

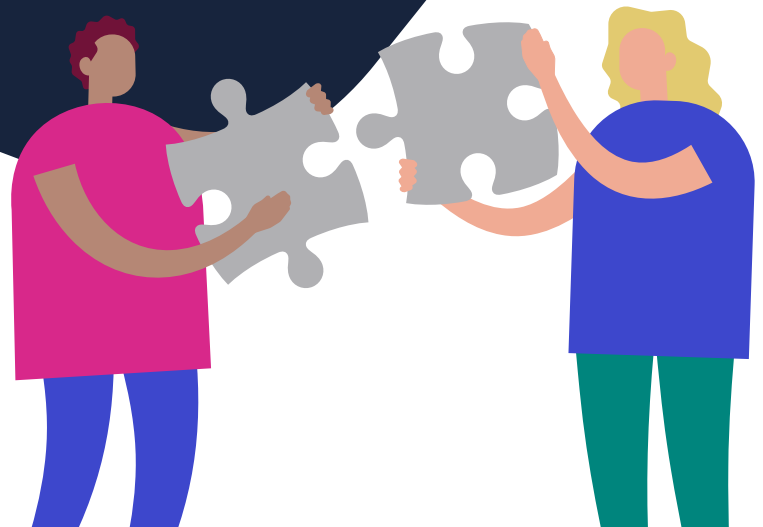


West  
Yorkshire  
Combined  
Authority

Tracy  
Brabin  
Mayor of  
West Yorkshire



# Adult Education Budget Annual Report 2022 - 2023



# Contents

<b>Foreword Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chair of the Employment and Skills Committee</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Summary and purpose</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Devolution and the Adult Education Budget</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>AEB funding lines</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The West Yorkshire AEB Strategy</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Free Courses for Jobs</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2022-2023 Headlines on progress</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Community Learning</b>	<b>17</b>
Performance Against Priorities	18
<b>Data Review</b>	<b>20</b>
Overall metrics	20
Adult Skills	21
Community Learning	22
Local authorities	24
Subject area	25
Level	27
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	27
Ethnicity	28
Disability	30
Sex	31
Supporting the unemployed	33
Supporting progression in employment	33
Basic skills	34
Deprivation	35
Legal Entitlements	37
Progression	38
Success rates and achievements	39
Destinations and Progression	42
<b>Provider Feedback</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Learner Success Stories and Testimonials</b>	<b>44</b>

# Foreword Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire

**I want to create a brighter West Yorkshire that works for all, where everyone can unleash their potential. Devolution is allowing us to make this happen. We're investing in what our region needs, supporting people to build the skills they need to secure and thrive in good work.**



The decisions I and my fellow local leaders are making are helping people across our region to succeed. Our £66 million Adult Education Budget (AEB) is at the centre of this success story.

In this past year, we have:

- Supported 47,000 residents to learn new skills on over 86,000 courses
- Doubled the number of adults achieving a level 3 qualification
- Supported 20,000 learners from the most deprived neighbourhoods
- Helped 16,800 unemployed residents through AEB learning
- Enabled 9,500 residents without prior qualifications to make their first step towards gaining essential skills through AEB courses.

This means better prospects, better jobs and increased earning potential for people right across West Yorkshire.

I want West Yorkshire to be a more inclusive region, where people are able to succeed no matter where they are from. By targeting AEB towards our most disadvantaged communities, we are making this happen. Because of the decisions we are making locally, we are reaching more learners from an ethnic minority, more learners supported with

a learning difficulty, disability or health problems, and more learners from our most deprived neighbourhoods year on year.

By collaborating with education providers, we have been able to offer learning opportunities in 450 locations, ensuring accessibility for all who seek to transform their lives through skills development.

Making decisions locally means we can respond to the needs of local businesses much more effectively. Our Routes to Success initiative has trained more than 100 bus drivers, directly tackling the shortage in this critical sector, and becoming a model of best practice for other regions. AEB also allowed us to train almost 800 telecoms engineers leading to employment for 85% of learners.

None of this would be possible without working in close partnership with our local authorities, colleges, training providers and community organisations who all play a vital role in the complex skills system.

Together, we will continue to champion and invest into our residents, businesses and places to build a truly inclusive and prosperous West Yorkshire where everyone can fulfil their potential.

# Chair of the Employment and Skills Committee

**Councillor Cathy Scott,  
Leader of Kirklees Council**

**Providing all residents of West Yorkshire with the opportunity to develop their skills and access quality learning is a crucial part to building our economy and expanding the job market for the future.**

The devolution deal secured for West Yorkshire has been instrumental in our ability to shape the trajectory of our region's workforce. Taking control of the annual £66 million Adult Education Budget (AEB) has empowered us to enact meaningful change.

One of the most impactful outcomes of this devolution has been the opportunity to build on existing relationships and grow robust partnerships between the Combined Authority, Local Authorities, Colleges, and training providers. These collaborations have enabled us to map clear progression pathways for residents of West Yorkshire, ensuring that individuals have the support and resources needed to advance in their careers.



Furthermore, through our strategic oversight and use of intelligence, we have been able to identify and address 'cold spots'—areas where educational opportunities are lacking—and target funding accordingly. This approach ensures that our investments are directed where they are needed most, maximising the impact of the AEB on our communities.

We continue to rise to the employment and skills related challenges and navigate the evolving landscape and I am confident that our commitment to collaboration and strategic investment will remain steadfast. Together, we will continue to foster an environment where every resident of West Yorkshire has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to our collective prosperity.

# Summary and purpose

This report summarises the position of Adult Education Budget in West Yorkshire: the priorities for investment and the possibilities available through devolution.

The review is dual purpose:

- To state specifically what has been delivered in the second year of devolved AEB, in terms of impact on West Yorkshire residents.
- To consider the change of this impact in comparison to the previous year and explore the impact of the flexibilities introduced.

In the main, the report shows an overwhelming positive picture in the support that AEB and Free Courses for Jobs delivers for West Yorkshire's residents: **47,000 residents** have been supported to upskill through over 82,000 courses.



The partnership of providers continues to work together to improve strategic planning and relationships, while learning programmes have been accessible in over **450 locations across West Yorkshire**, ensuring residents have local access to reduce barriers to participation.



There is a similarly encouraging depiction of the changes and prioritisation of the funding in year 2. There is increased funding investment in priority areas: more residents supported from acutely disadvantaged areas, a more diverse demographics engaged in learning, double the number of learners achieving their first level 3, more people on a low wage supported to upskill and increased learning in key sectors such as digital and engineering and manufacturing.

The report also highlights areas for improvement and/or further investigation – such as improving collation of destinations including wider outcomes, the predominance of a younger demographic participating in AEB, and, while the number of individuals supported with a learning difficulty or disability was maintained from 21/22, the number supported through learning support funding shows an increase to above the West Yorkshire demographic average.

The report provides detailed analysis across a range of key themes and summarises some of the key progress made against the five West Yorkshire AEB priorities.

# Devolution and the Adult Education Budget

Devolution of the annual Adult Education Budget (AEB) was included as part of the March 2020 devolution deal agreed between West Yorkshire Combined Authority (The Combined Authority) and Government.

Devolution of AEB includes taking control of the then £65million annual budget for West Yorkshire residents and direct management of the training providers in West Yorkshire who deliver the funding provision. It also allows the region to set its own priorities for funding and allows the Combined Authority to align spending on skills to the opportunities and needs in the local economy. Devolved AEB went live in West Yorkshire in August 2021.

More than 50% of AEB across the country is now controlled by devolved areas. Department for Education (DfE) continues to fund AEB delivery in non-devolved areas.

## What is AEB?

The principal purpose of AEB is to engage adults and provide them with the skills needed for entering and sustaining work, an apprenticeship or other further learning and to achieve the equivalent of GCSE and A Level qualifications. The funding pays specifically for learning programmes (predominantly qualifications) and provides an element of learner support funding for those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

AEB supports the following legal entitlements to full funding for eligible learners:

- First Full Level 2
- First Full Level 3
- English and Maths
- Digital

In the national system, there are age restrictions regarding these entitlements, however as part of devolution we have removed these barriers and simplified access for West Yorkshire residents.

Any adult over the age of 19 is eligible for support through AEB. In particular, the following people are entitled to access free training if they are:

- Unemployed and seeking work
- Wanting to achieve Level 2 in Maths or English for the first time
- Earning a low wage (currently less than £23,400)
- Wanting to achieve basic digital skills
- Wanting to achieve their first GCSE or A Level equivalent qualification and are aged between 19 and 23.

# AEB funding lines

AEB funding is made up of 4 components:

- 1. Formula funding** – funding per learner, per qualification delivered. The funding rate achieved is based on the size/type of qualification and is weighted depending on a learner’s status (e.g. unemployed) and based on areas of disadvantage. This constituted around £59.4 million of the West Yorkshire AEB pot in 2022-2023, and funds sector specific vocational programmes, along with English, Maths, ESOL, digital skills and employability programmes.
- 2. Community Learning** is a sub-set of the Adult Education Budget. It is exceptionally flexible and operates on an open book accounting basis, with providers able to set their own fee policy, based on a set of funding principles. The purpose of Community Learning is to develop the skills, confidence, motivation, and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds. Only local authorities and FE Colleges hold this funding. Community Learning allocations in 2022-2023 accounted for £8.73 million of the allocated AEB funds in West Yorkshire, which was 14% of the total AEB pot.
- 3. Learner support** is available to provide financial support for residents with a specific financial hardship preventing them from taking part/ continuing in learning (i.e., travel, equipment, fee waivers).
- 4. Learning support** meets the cost of putting in place a reasonable adjustment, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, for learners who have an identified learning difficulty and/ or disability, to achieve their learning goal.

# The West Yorkshire AEB Strategy

As part of preparation for devolution, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority developed and consulted upon the West Yorkshire AEB Strategy to determine the priorities and principles for the devolved fund.

The 5 priorities for funding are:

- Support the unemployed to gain and sustain employment
- Unlock progression opportunities and career adaptability through skills, particularly for those on low wages and with insecure work
- Make learning more inclusive to support disadvantaged residents
- Increase the supply of skills to support key sectors in West Yorkshire
- Improve West Yorkshire's resilience by identifying and delivering the skills needed for the future

The ambition for devolution was to:

- Make the skills system more responsive and accessible through stronger local influence with all training providers
- Focus on our 'place', and ensure the right training and support offers are made to fill the skills gaps which are most prevalent locally
- Deliver a more efficient system by focussing on quality of provision and the impact it has on learners
- Make sure learning opportunities are joined up to local progression opportunities in life and work
- Work closely in partnership with providers to bring together planning of the wider skills and post-16 education system

To deliver this, the following key values and behaviours were agreed for both the Combined Authority and prospective providers to uphold:



## Place-based

Develop a place-based curriculum offer and wrap-around support with a clear focus on learner progression



## Outstanding

Strive to deliver outstanding provision that puts the needs of learners and employees at the centre of delivery



## Partnership

Work with partners and stakeholders in a positive and effective way, sharing best practice and improving the impact of skills system across West Yorkshire



## Openness

Communicate openly and transparently with stakeholders, learners and partners



## Progression

Develop approaches and partnerships which support adults to progress and prosper within their communities and employment



## Subcontracting

Subcontract with integrity and ensure that positive outcomes for learners and employers is at the heart of all arrangements

This report provides data and examples of the progress made in these areas in year 2, and the alignment to the funding priorities.



# Free Courses for Jobs

In September 2020, the Prime Minister announced the Lifetime Skills Guarantee. As part of this, DfE has introduced Free Courses for Jobs (FCfJ), previously known as National Skills Fund (NSF) Level 3 offer for adults.

Given that its offer is fundamentally an extension of the Adult Education Budget's eligibility, the delivery of FCfJ has been aligned to the West Yorkshire AEB Strategy in terms of its objectives and priorities.

FCfJ investments helps adults to train and gain the valuable skills they need to improve their job prospects. It supports the immediate economic recovery and future skills needs by boosting the supply of skills that employers require.

Any adult aged 19 and over, who does not already have a level 3 qualification (equivalent to an advanced technical certificate or diploma, or A levels) or higher, can access hundreds of fully funded level 3 courses to support them gain new skills and access opportunities and gain employment.

In addition, from April 2022, any adult in West Yorkshire earning under the Real Living Wage or unemployed was able to access these qualifications for free, regardless of their prior qualification level.

This offer is part of the government's long-term commitment to help everyone gain skills for life. Courses are available in a variety of lengths, to support adults to get the skills they need to boost their careers.

DfE identified the sectors for this offer by reviewing the criteria used to identify qualifications for the high value course premium (HVCP), and adding other relevant sectors based on an assessment of economic need and strategic priority. Combined authorities have had the flexibility in 2022-2023 to offer qualifications outside of the national list to meet the skills shortages of West Yorkshire.

## 2022-2023 Headlines on progress

- A total of **47,280 learners** (including continuing learners) were supported through West Yorkshire's devolved AEB programme in the 2022-2023 academic year.
- There was a year on year increase of 10% in the number of learners supported in 2022-2023, driven by strong growth in Free Courses for Jobs and Adult Skills provision.
- The number of learners achieving a first level 3 qualification more than doubled in 2022-2023 compared with the previous year, growing by around 130%.



- The proportion of Adult Skills starts that were fully funded through the programme in 2022-2023 was 84%, an increase on the 79% recorded in the previous year. This reflects a continued focus on the most disadvantaged learners.
- The subject areas seeing the strongest growth in Adult Skills starts in 2022-2023 were Preparation for Life and Work, Information and Communication Technology and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies. This growth was offset by declines in Health, public services and care and Leisure, travel and tourism.



- People from an ethnic minority accounted for 62% of Adult Skills learners, 49% of Community Learning participants and 57% of total learners in 2022-2023. The number of ethnic minority learners increased by 10% compared with 2021-2022 and as a proportion of total learners those from an ethnic minority group grew from 54% to 57%.
- The proportion of learners with a learning difficulty, disability or health problems was unchanged from the previous year at 17%.
- 16% of Adult Skills/FCfJ learners indicated that they had a learning difficulty, disability or health problem in 2022-2023. However, a further 9% of learners who did not declare a learning difficulty, disability or health problem received learning support, raising the proportion with support needs to 25% of total learners.
- Young people accounted for a relatively large proportion of learners. Around 5,100 Adult Skills learners were aged 19-23 years, 16% of total learners for this programme strand. Across the wider population this group accounts for 11% of people aged 19-64.

- There has been an increased focus on getting people into employment within the devolved AEB programme. The proportion of Adult Skills starts for learners who were out of work (either unemployed or inactive) increased from 69% to 71% year on year.
- Nonetheless, more than a quarter (26%) of Adult Skills starts were for learners who were in employment, reflecting the commitment to enable learners to progress in employment. Around 37% of basic literacy starts, 34% of basic numeracy starts and 18% of ESOL starts were for learners who were in employment.
- 6,660 Adult Skills starts were supported through the low wage pilot during the academic year, equivalent to 11% of all Adult Skills starts. A further 510 starts were supported through the low wage offer for Free Courses for Jobs (Level 3) learners.
- There were 23,500 starts on basic skills courses during the academic year, equivalent to 40% of all Adult Skills starts.
- Around 85% of starts across digital entitlement, basic literacy, basic numeracy and ESOL courses related to learners from an ethnic minority.
- The number of basic skills starts saw year on year growth of 2,870 or 14% whilst the number of basic skills learners grew by 6%, a net increase of 640. This was driven primarily by an increase of 17%, or 1,710, in the number of ESOL starts, although there was growth across all basic skills categories.
- During the 2022-2023 academic year around 18,300 learners (or 41% of the total) were resident in the most deprived neighbourhoods (IMD decile 1). The proportion increases to around one half for both Bradford (54%) and Leeds (50%). Year-on-year the proportion of learners from the most deprived neighbourhoods grew by 4% in volume terms, with the share of total learners remaining the same, at 41%.
- Overall, 45% of starts by Adult Skills and FCfJ learners, or 26,890 in absolute terms, were for learning that represented progression during 2022-2023. This is an improvement on the previous year's figure of 43%. Around 17,200 starts, or 29% of the total in 2022-2023, related to a first qualification for learners with no previous qualification.



- The overall success rate for the Adult Skills programme for 2022-2023 academic year was 87%, a small increase on the 86% recorded in 2021-2022. Vocational aims at Entry Level, Level 1, and Level 2 had the highest success rates of all provision types.
- Around 8,300 Adult Skills and FCfJ learners achieved their first qualification during the academic year; 5,000 achieved a first Level 2 qualification and 1,100 achieved a first qualification at Level 3.
- Overall, 8,400 learners achieved positive progression in 2022-2023 by moving into an education, employment or voluntary work destination; this is equivalent to 34% of learners with a known destination.

# West Yorkshire systemic changes and flexibilities

In consultation with West Yorkshire providers, local flexibilities were implemented to enhance devolved provision in West Yorkshire. These are described and the level of take-up achieved under these flexibilities is examined in the following table. When considering volumes of take-up, it should be noted that this is primarily pilot activity.

Some of the flexibilities introduced during 2022-2023 enabled large numbers of starts and therefore widened participation in the programme. This was particularly the case for full funding for asylum seekers, access to full funding for people in low wage

employment and for the flexibility in Level 2 courses for 19-23 year olds. The value and impact of all the flexibilities piloted in 2022-2023 is currently being reviewed.

Local flexibilities were also utilised for Free Courses for Jobs provision. Combined authorities were provided with the facility to nominate learning aims to meet local needs, in addition to qualifications in the national Free Courses for Jobs offer. In total, there were around 150 starts funded through this flexibility, accounting for approximately 10% of total starts on Free Courses for Jobs.

Flexibility	Rationale	Impact
Increased funding rate by 10% (2022-2023 and 2023-2024)	The AEB national funding rate has not increased in ten years, and the budget overall has fallen. The current economic situation is dramatically increasing operating costs, and this is affecting the quality of learning that providers are able to deliver. To be reviewed in line with National Funding Rate reforms 2024-2025	Even with the rate increase there was a 10% increase in participation across Adult Skills provision.
Increasing the low wage threshold	The threshold has been increased to the Real Living Wage, which is reviewed and calculated annually, to allow more residents on low incomes to undertake fully funded training.	6,660 Adult Skills starts supported through the low wage pilot during the academic year.  A further 510 starts were supported through the low wage offer for Free Courses for Jobs (level 3) learners.

Flexibility	Rationale	Impact
<p>Expanding the age of entitlement for a 'first full level 2' from 19-23 to 19+</p>	<p>The expansion of the age of entitlement for a 'first full Level 2' qualification from 19-23 to 19+ in West Yorkshire signifies a positive shift for residents. With nearly 400,000 individuals in the region holding qualifications below Level 2, this change offers an opportunity for adults of all ages to pursue these qualifications (equivalent to 5 GCSEs A* to C or 9 to 4), without financial barriers, can undertake these qualifications for free.</p> <p>This change has contributed to our ambition to prioritise funding to those who are more in need, and to simplify eligibility to funds at point of access for the individuals.</p>	<p>170 starts under this flexibility during 2022-2023.</p> <p>46% of starts were for unemployed learners and 37% for learners in employment.</p>
<p>Expanding the 'Digital Entitlement' to ensure digital skills for all</p>	<p>Making sure everyone in Yorkshire and Humber has essential digital skills is a priority for the Combined Authority. Currently, nearly a quarter of adults in the region lack these vital skills for everyday life. Among them, 7% are completely excluded from basic digital tasks like using a device, a mouse or keyboard, connecting to Wi-Fi, or browsing the internet.</p> <p>Feedback from the sector suggested that the limited variety of approved qualifications was a significant reason for this. Working with the sector, efforts have been made to approve funding in West Yorkshire for more digital qualifications. This initiative provides people with the necessary skills by expanding the range of available qualifications.</p> <p>This work aligns with the Social Digital Inclusion objective in West Yorkshire's Digital Skills Plan. The goal is to support adults in West Yorkshire in acquiring the digital skills essential for both daily life and work.</p>	<p>200 starts during 2022-2023 academic year.</p> <p>60% of starts for unemployed learners.</p>

Flexibility	Rationale	Impact
<p>Test Pilot: Bridging programmes that support progression to Level 3</p>	<p>As a delegated fund, there is little ability to shape and design Free Courses for Jobs, but AEB can be used flexibly to support adults in progressing and taking up this opportunity. This pilot aimed to bridge the ‘jump’ between level 2 and level 3, particularly when an adult has been out of education for a while.</p> <p>Working with providers who have funding from ‘Free Courses for Jobs’ to create short ‘bridging programmes.’ These programs act as a steppingstone to longer Level 3 courses. They could include modules at Level 2 or Level 3, serving as a taste or a refresher, or even a package focusing on self-study or research skills etc.</p>	<p>Around 30 starts during academic year.</p> <p>Among learners who undertook a Bridging programme 4 have progressed onto a Level 3 aim so far.</p>
<p>Test Pilot: Increasing the number of courses 19-23s are entitled to</p>	<p>It was identified adults aged 19-23 face restrictions on the courses they can take due to rules about eligibility for a ‘first full Level 2’ qualification. This is a result of the combined authority ambition to provide adults with a substantial, GCSE equivalent qualification – but can disadvantage those who would benefit from shorter interventions.</p> <p>To address this, test pilots are in place to explore how we can offer more flexibility to 19-23 year-olds in accessing learning for their first Level 2 qualification. We have worked with providers to expand the range of qualifications available through AEB.</p> <p>This flexibility seeks to address changes to national policy that are prohibitive to engaging some of our more disadvantaged groups. Through these proposals we continue to simplify eligibility for individuals at the point of access, and promote an open and inclusive West Yorkshire.</p>	<p>390 starts during 2022-2023 academic year.</p> <p>Three-quarters (74%) of starts for unemployed learners.</p>

Flexibility	Rationale	Impact
Waiving the '3 Year UK Residency' status for full funding	<p>Previously, family members of EEA and UK nationals could access Adult Education Budget (AEB) provision without needing three years of ordinary residency. However, in early 2021-2022, the ESFA removed this exemption. Now, family members must have been ordinarily resident in the UK or EEA for the previous three years on the first day of learning to be eligible for AEB funded provision.</p> <p>This change has made it difficult for dependents, such as partners, parents, or adult children of EEA or UK nationals, to access AEB funded training that could support them in life or work.</p> <p>Our approach aimed to reverse this rule change and allow family members of eligible UK and EEA nationals to have 'day 1' access to AEB funded provision.</p>	Simplification of the system to increase inclusivity.
Providing full funding for eligible asylum seekers	<p>The Combined Authority has made it easier for eligible asylum seekers to access education by providing full funding.</p> <p>Currently, asylum seekers become eligible for AEB funding after residing in the UK for 6 months. However, they still face challenges in accessing courses. Because they cannot work and do not receive benefits, they don't meet the AEB 'unemployed' definition, making them only eligible for co-funding. While some providers waive fees where possible, many do not, creating a significant financial barrier for learners.</p> <p>This financial barrier significantly limits the accessibility of adult skills provision for asylum seekers, many of whom require English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) support to help their integration into society.</p>	2,670 starts during 2022-2023 academic year, for 1,350 learners

## Responsiveness Initiatives

1. In 2022-2023 the Combined Authority Commissioned Routes to Success to address the regional shortages of bus drivers. Co-designed with the Confederation of Passenger Transport, with endorsement from the sector, a two-stage skills programme was launched to support individuals to gain roles as bus drivers. The model has been adopted across other combined authorities and to date it has trained more than 100 drivers in West Yorkshire.
2. In 2022-2023 procurement took place which recruited expert providers to engage and deliver telecoms, digital infrastructure and rail engineering skills with established relationships to employers with vacancies. In 2022-2023 85% of learners progressed into employment. Targets are included to increase engagement with underrepresented individuals in these sectors, for example, the sector highlighted a demand for increased numbers of women in telecoms.



# Community Learning

A Review of Community Learning took place in 2022-2023 which demonstrated there is a clear rationale underpinning curriculum planning: 'the needs of the learner'. Most of the funding is spent on targeted provision in disadvantaged communities, supporting individuals with the most complex and challenging lives. This is reflected in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) table below.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation	1-3	4-6	7-10
% Learners accessing Provision	64%	19%	17%

Community Learning providers work closely with LA strategic colleagues to examine where there are geographical and demographic 'cold spots' working collaboratively to ensure the funding has the greatest impact where it is needed most.

In 2023-2024 a number of the recommendations from the Community Learning review are being implemented including exploring wider outcomes, sharing best practice and developing local delivery plans.

## Performance Against Priorities

The following section sets out key messages relating to delivery of devolved AEB in West Yorkshire in 2022-2023 academic year to demonstrate the scale and nature of the impact of the programme.

In the table below evidence of impact is mapped against the key outcomes / priorities presented in the Combined Authority's AEB Strategy.

Priority	Objectives	Delivered in Year 2
Increase the supply of skills to support key sectors in West Yorkshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase number of people with basic employability skills (L2 and3)</li> <li>• Increase number of people with higher level skills</li> <li>• Provide skills for key sector – decrease skills shortages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telecoms and Rail Engineer skills training delivery with industry links and high levels of progression into jobs. 85% of individuals who achieved a qualification in Telecoms Engineering gained employment.</li> <li>• Collaboration with DWP has led to bespoke skills training in construction, logistics and security with progression targets into employment.</li> <li>• Around 5,000 Adult Skills and FCfJ learners achieved a first Level 2 qualification and 1,100 achieved a first qualification at Level 3 in 2022/23.</li> </ul>
Improve West Yorkshire's resilience by developing skills for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills for climate emergency and changing economy</li> <li>• Boost basic and intermediate Digital Skills to support inclusion and workplace progression</li> <li>• Increase flexible methods of delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital skills are increasingly essential in the modern workplace</li> <li>• Starts on Essential Digital Skills courses, which the target the fundamental skills needed for work and life, grew by more than 80% compared with the previous year, rising to 1,290</li> <li>• The broader digital subject area saw the biggest increase in starts across all programme strands during 2022/23, growing by 1,600 compared with the previous year and increasing its share of total starts from 6% in 2021-2022 to 8% in 2022/23</li> </ul>

Priority	Objectives	Delivered in Year 2
Make learning more inclusive to support disadvantaged residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase participation and skills levels from disadvantaged communities and groups</li> <li>• Extend the reach of learning opportunities to a broader range of underrepresented groups</li> <li>• Build confidence of lower skilled learners to engage and progress in learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proportion of learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem remained the same at 17%</li> <li>• There is recognition across providers that this number is unlikely to be a true reflection as learners do not always disclose whether they have a learning difficulty or disability. Within Adult Skills 9% of learners who did not declare a learning difficulty, disability or health problem received learning support, raising the proportion to 25% of total learners with a support need (when added to the 16% of Adult Skills learners with a declared learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem)</li> <li>• The proportion of learners residing in the most acutely deprived neighbourhoods (IMD decile 1) was 41%, rising to 54% in Bradford and 50% in Leeds</li> </ul>
Support the unemployed to gain and sustain employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase participation of people in 'good work'</li> <li>• Connect unemployment support with skills development, working with Job centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The employment status profile of Adult Skills learners shifted slightly, with unemployed individuals accounting for a bigger share in 2022/23</li> <li>• The proportion of unemployed learners increased from 50% of learners to 52% year on year in 2022/23</li> <li>• Employed learners accounted for a reduced share, decreasing from 35% to 33% The proportion of economically inactive learners remained the same at 14%</li> </ul>
Unlock progression opportunities and career adaptability through skills, particularly for those on low wages and with insecure work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve career prospects of residents</li> <li>• Connect people to new job opportunities through increased skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The devolved AEB programme makes special provision for learners in employment who are paid below the Real Living Wage: 6,660 Adult Skills starts were supported through the low wage pilot during the academic year. A further 510 starts were supported through the low wage offer for Free Courses for Jobs (level 3) learners</li> </ul>

# Data Review

## Overall metrics

Despite the rising costs of learning delivery, the scale of the devolved AEB programme was maintained during 2022-2023. A total of 47,280 learners (including continuing learners) were supported across the three strands of the programme during the academic year, with 44,590 new learners and 82,040 starts.

The number of total learners supported during 2022-2023 increased by 10% (4,160) compared with the previous academic year, while new learners increased by 3% (+1,470) and starts grew by 6% (+4,640).

2020-2021 was the last year before devolution of AEB was implemented in West Yorkshire and provides a baseline year for reviewing the changes brought about through devolution.

Between 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 the number of learners supported during the year grew by 11% (+4,690); new learners also increased by 11% (+4,320); and starts grew by 10% (+7,470).

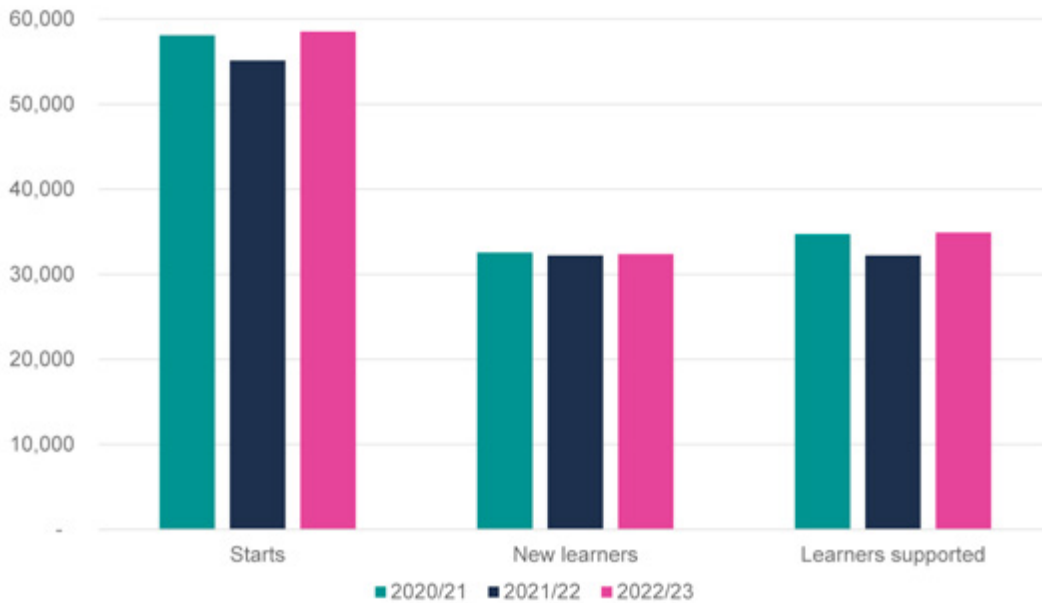
## Explanation of volume measures used in the report

- Starts – a count of new course enrolments for which learning started during the academic year. Individual learners often start multiple courses within their programme of learning and each of these is counted as a start.
- New learners – a count of individual learners who started one or more courses during the academic year. Each learner is counted once no matter how many courses they started during the year.
- Learners supported – a count of individual learners who participated in learning during the academic year, including learners who started during a previous year but continued their learning into the current year. Each learner is counted once no matter how many courses they took part in during the year.

The AEB programme consists of 3 distinctive strands, which need to be examined separately in terms of volumes.

## Adult Skills

Within the Adult Skills strand 34,900 learners were supported during 2022-2023 – 74% of total AEB learners. There were 32,370 new learners during the academic year and 58,530 starts.



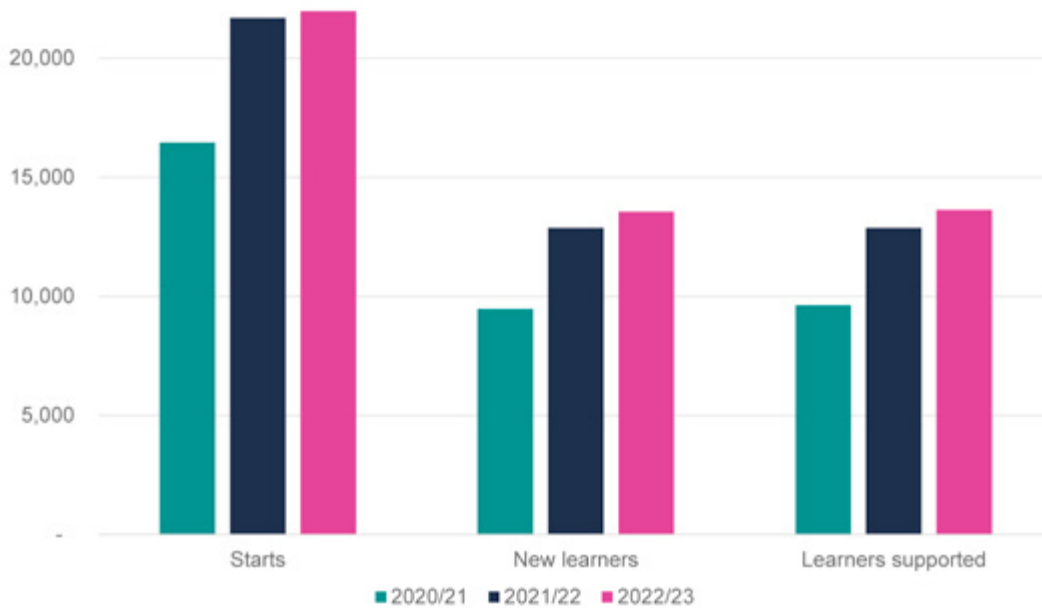
**Figure 1**  
**Trend in key volume measures for Adult Skills strand**

Adult Skills starts increased by 6% (+3,370) in 2022-2023 compared with the previous academic year, taking their level slightly above the figure for the baseline year of 2020-2021. The number of new learners and the number of learners supported remained fairly flat over the three-year period. There was a dip in the number of learners supported in 2021-2022 because continuing learners were funded through the national programme during that year as part of transitional arrangements for the first year of devolution.

The proportion of Adult Skills starts that were fully funded through the programme in 2022-2023 was 84%, an increase on the 79% recorded in the previous year. This reflects a continued focus on the most disadvantaged learners.

## Community Learning

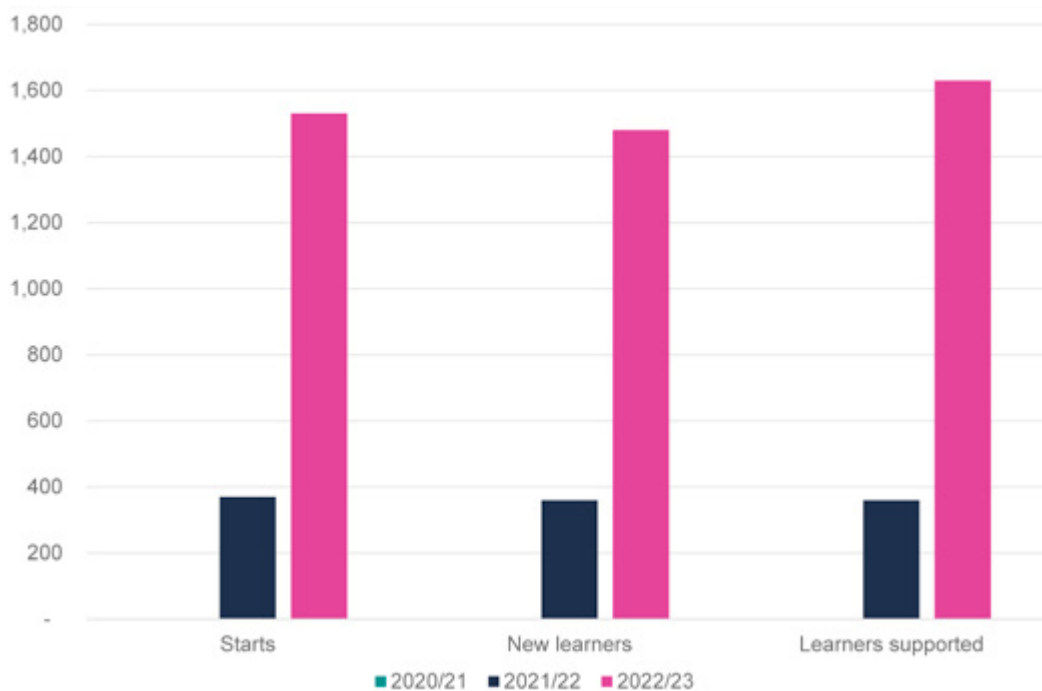
The Community Learning strand of the programme has grown substantially under devolution, partly reflecting the impact of the pandemic which limited take-up of classroom learning, particularly in 2020-2021.



**Figure 2 Trend in key volume measures for Community Learning strand**

The number of learners supported increased by 6% (+760) in 2022-2023 compared with the previous year and by 42% (+4,010) relative to the baseline year of 2020-2021.

The number of new learners grew at a similar rate to learners supported over both comparison periods. The volume of starts grew more slowly, by only 1% between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 and by a still substantial 33% between 2020-2021 and 2022-2023. This shows that learners became less likely to undertake multiple courses during the period.



**Figure 3 Trend in key volume measures for Free Courses for Jobs strand**

Free Courses for Jobs (formerly National Skills Fund) was introduced in West Yorkshire at the start of 2021-2022. Volumes were small in that first year but increased substantially year-on-year in 2022-2023 by more than 300% in the case of all three volume measures.

In addition to the learners aged 24 and above who are funded through the Free Courses for Jobs programme, learners aged 19 to 23 are also eligible to undertake Free Course for Jobs aims, although they are funded through the devolved Adult Skills strand. There were 260 starts among this group in 2022-2023, an increase from the 120 starts recorded in 2021-2022.

### **AEB programme strands**

The **Adult Skills** strand is the largest element of the programme. All courses are formula-funded under this strand and the majority of courses lead to a regulated qualification. Basic skills courses (literacy, numeracy and ESOL) are part of the Adult Skills strand together with a wide range of vocational provision. Certain groups have a legal entitlement to free learning through the Adult Skills strand – take-up of these entitlements is examined later in this report.

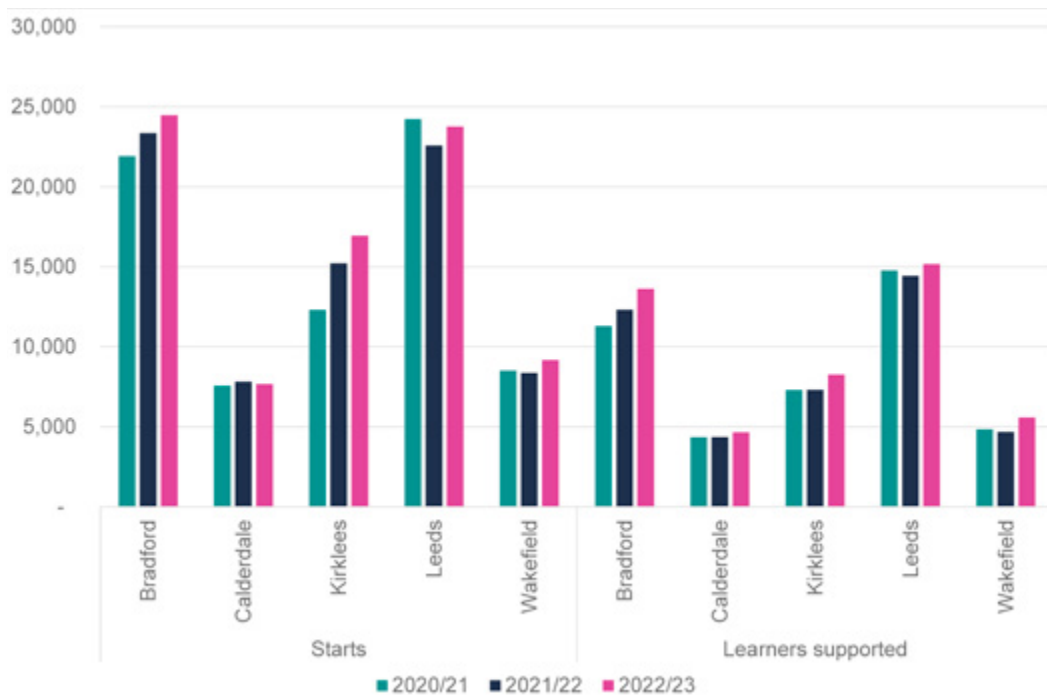
The purpose of **Community Learning** is to develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of adults in order to progress towards formal learning or employment; improve their health and well-being, including mental health; and develop stronger communities. The main focus of Community Learning provision is on non-regulated provision rather than regulated qualifications. It is also block-funded – eligible grant-funded providers receive a single funding allocation rather than being funded on the basis of learners volumes or specific qualifications delivered.

**Free Courses for Jobs** (FCfJ) is a delegated rather than a devolved programme, which means that it has been designed by central government and there is less scope for the Combined Authority and its partners to apply flexibilities at local level. It is considered in this report because its objectives are closely aligned to those of devolved AEB. The focus of this provision is on people aged 24+ who need to undertake a qualification at Level 3 to get a job or to progress their career. People aged 19-23 can also access the same Level 3 courses but this provision is funded from the devolved Adult Skills funding stream.

Although volumes and learners and starts are a key performance measure it should be emphasised that funding for the devolved programme in West Yorkshire is pre-determined by central government and does not expand to meet growth in learner demand. This means that overall growth in numbers of learners and starts cannot be expected, especially at a time of high inflation when providers' costs are rising.

## Local authorities

Four out of five local authorities saw year-on-year growth in starts during 2022-2023, contributing to overall growth of 6% for West Yorkshire. Kirklees saw the biggest increase in absolute and percentage terms with net growth of 11% or 1,720 compared with 2021-2022, followed by Wakefield (+10%; +800). Starts in Bradford and Leeds grew by 5% in each case, and by 1,110 and 1,170 respectively in absolute terms. Starts in Calderdale declined slightly by 2% or 150 in absolute terms.

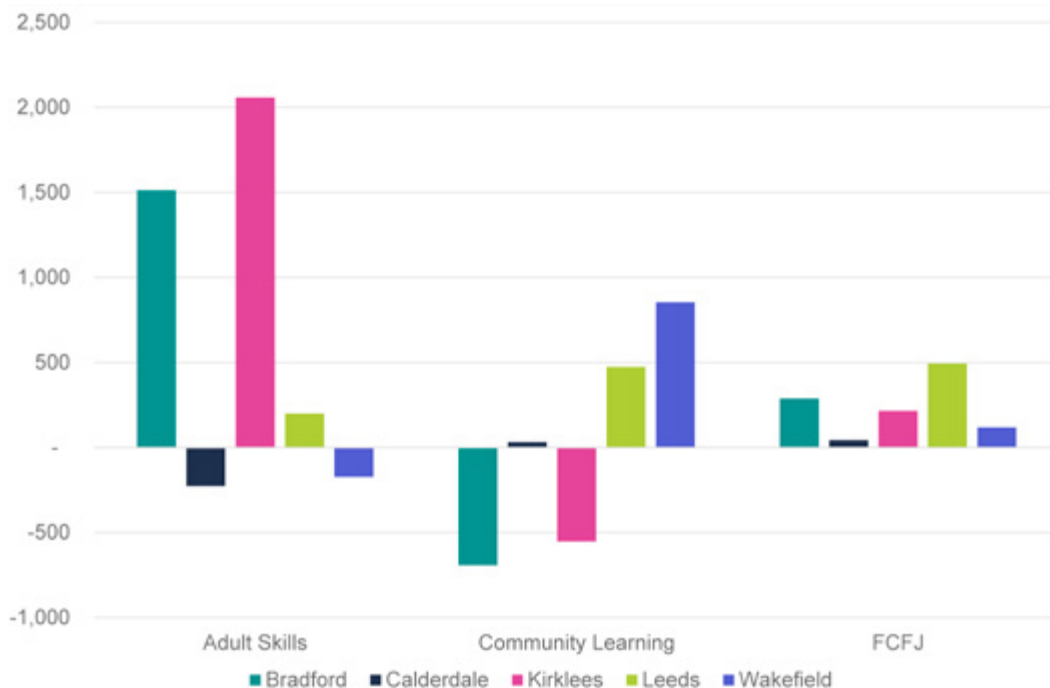


**Figure 4 Trend in key volume measures by local authority (all programme strands)**

*Note: Learners assigned to local authority areas by place of residence*

The pattern of change in learners supported is different to that of starts due to changes in the ratio of starts to learners at local authority level. The overall number of learners supported (including learners who started in the previous academic year) grew by 10% across West Yorkshire and all local authorities shared in this growth. The fastest rate of growth of 19% was in Wakefield but the biggest net growth in absolute terms, of 1,300, was in Bradford (11% in percentage terms). There was strong growth in Kirklees (+11%; +950), followed by Calderdale (+300; +7%) and Leeds (+730; +5%).



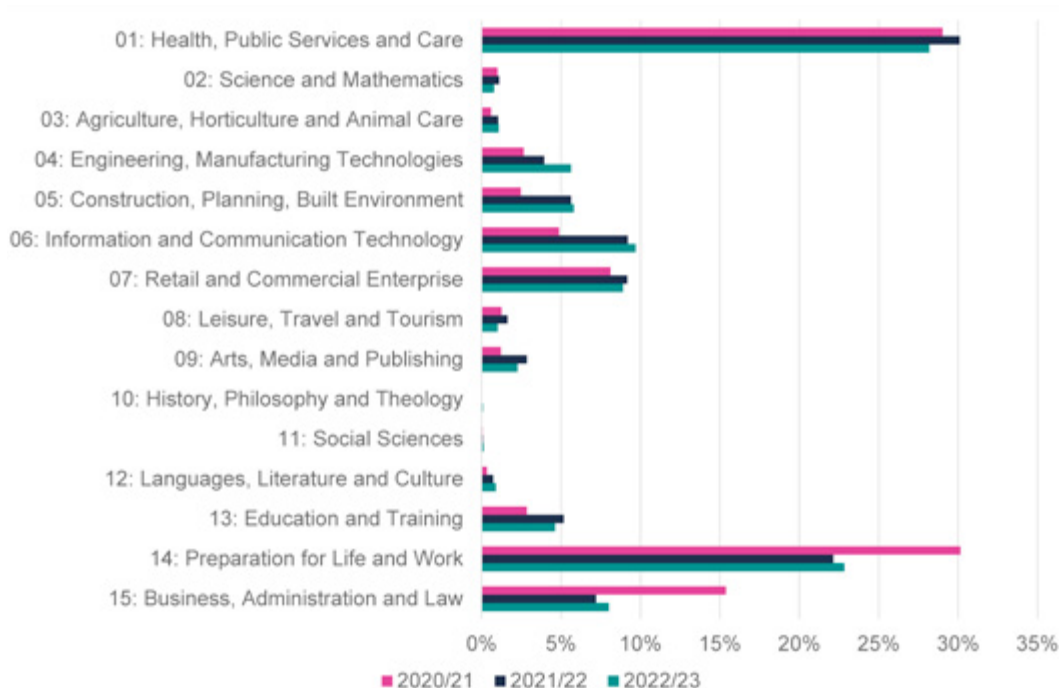


**Figure 5 Net change in starts (2022-2023 vs 2021-2022) by local authority and programme strand**

The underlying pattern of starts by local authority was highly variable in 2022-2023. All local authorities saw growth in the number of starts on FCFJ but overall growth in Adult Skills starts was driven by Kirklees and Bradford, whilst starts declined in Calderdale and Wakefield. There was modest overall growth in Community Learning starts in 2022-2023 but this was due to expansion in Wakefield and Leeds, in contrast to the declines seen in Bradford and Kirklees. Only Leeds experienced growth in starts to varying degrees across all three strands.

### Subject area

When basic skills aims are excluded, the subject areas with the highest take-up in terms of Adult Skills starts during the 2022-2023 academic year were Health, public services and care (28% of total starts), Preparation for life and work (excluding enrolments for basic skills aims) (23% of total starts) and Information and communication technology (10% of starts).



**Figure 6 Profile of Adult Skills starts by subject area (excluding basic skills aims)**

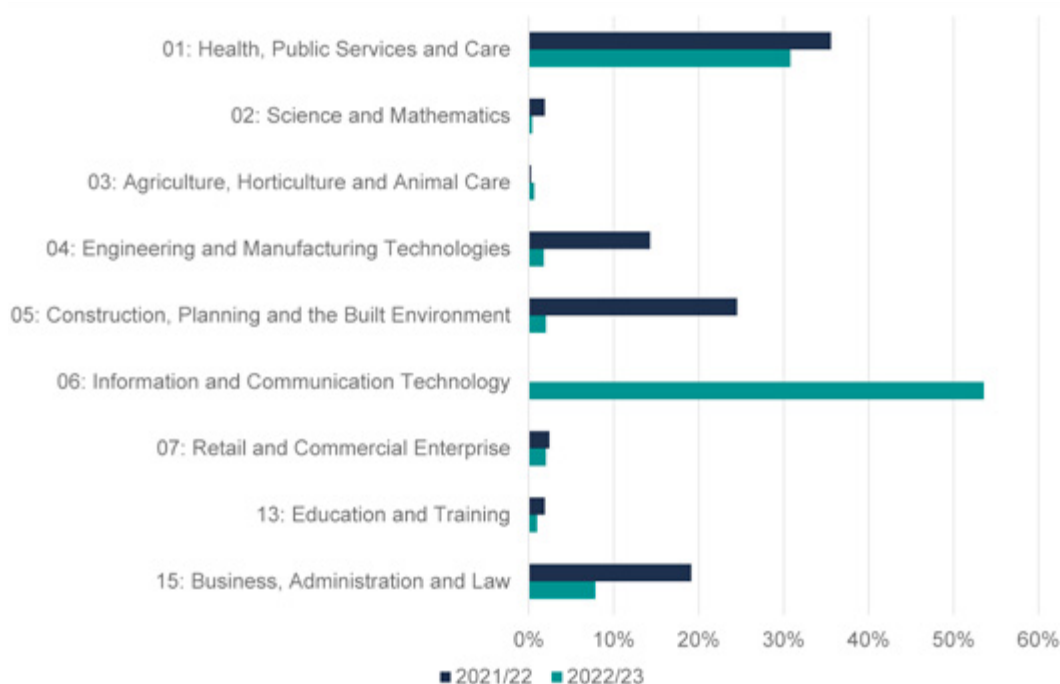
The total number of Adults Skills starts grew by 1% year on year in 2022-2023 when basic skills aims are excluded but performance at subject level was variable. The subjects with the biggest net growth in starts were Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (+610, +45%), Preparation for Life and Work (+360, +5%), Business, Administration and Law (+320, +13%) and Information and communication Technology (+220,+7%).

However, the Information and communication technology subject area saw much larger net year-on-year-growth of 610 or 16% when aims falling within the Digital Entitlement are included (which are classed within basic skills provision).

There were substantial reductions in starts for a number of subject areas during 2022-2023, including the following:

- Health, Public Services and Care (-521; -5%), which was mainly due to a fall in Health and social care.
- Leisure, Travel and Tourism (-209; -37%), due to a fall in Sport, leisure and recreation.
- Arts, Media and Publishing (-195; -20%), due to a reduction in Crafts, creative arts and design.
- Education and Training (-163; -9%), due to fewer starts in Direct learning support.

FCfJ starts are more narrowly focused in subject terms than Adult Skills starts despite the increase in the volume of starts for the former between 2021-2022 (total of 370 starts) and 2022-2023 (total of 1,530 starts).



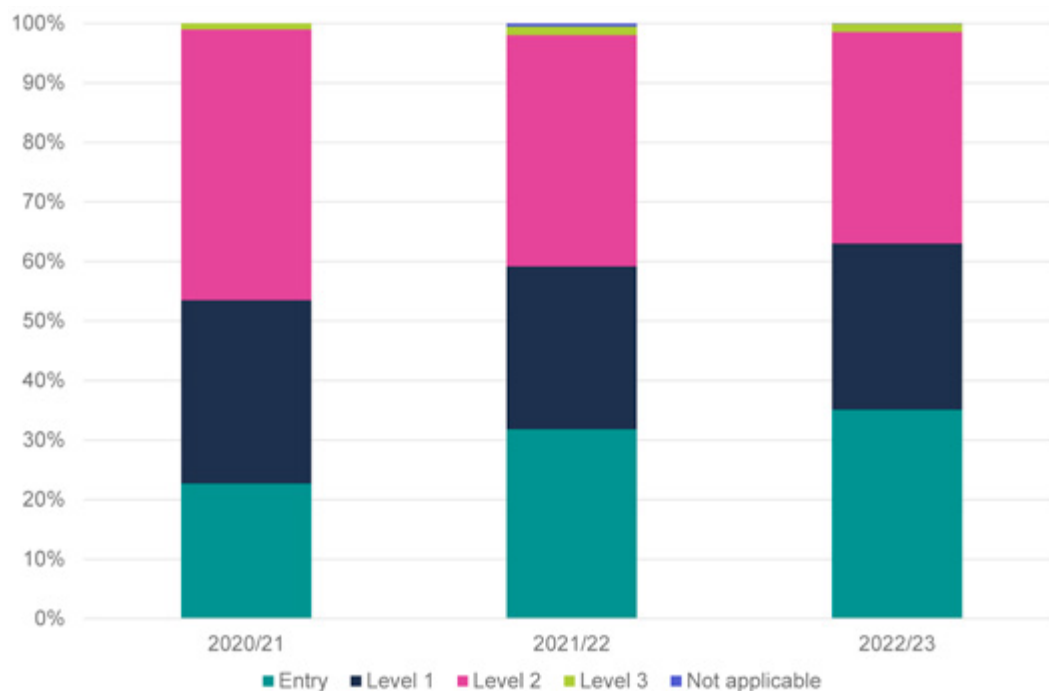
**Figure 7 Profile of FCfJ starts by subject area**

In 2022-2023 the dominant subjects were Information and communication technology with 820 starts or 54% of the total, followed by Health, public services and care with 470 starts or 31% of the total (these were primarily in Health and social care). There was also a substantial number of starts in Business, Administration and Law, at 120 accounting for 8% of the total (these were split between Accounting and finance and Business management).

## Level

The main focus of Adult Skills provision is on qualifications up to and including Level 2. Level 2 is equivalent to GCSE and is typically equated with the qualification level required for basic employability. In addition, some Level 3 provision is fully-funded for 19-23 year olds in line with the relevant legal entitlement.

The profile of Adult Skills starts by level changed between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. Starts at Entry level increased their share from 32% to 35%, Level 1 starts remained largely unchanged in terms of share, whilst starts at Level 2 saw a reduction in share from 39% to 36%. Starts at Level 3 were unchanged in terms of their share of total starts.



**Figure 8 Adult Skills starts by notional NVQ Level**

Underpinning these changes in share were substantial changes in qualification volumes – Entry level starts grew by nearly 3,000 or 17%; Level 1 starts grew by nearly 1,300 or 8%; and Level 2 starts declined by more than 600 or 3%. The volume of Level 3 starts was unchanged.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

One of the key objectives of West Yorkshire’s devolved AEB programme is to make learning more inclusive. This section examines the profile of learners according to their ethnicity, disability status and sex, focusing on the picture in 2022-2023 and comparing it with the pre-devolution situation in 2021-2022.

## Ethnicity

People from ethnic minority groups<sup>1</sup> are strongly represented among learners undertaking AEB-funded courses in West Yorkshire, with 25,640 learners enrolling on a course during the 2022-2023 academic year, equivalent to 57% of all new learners. For Adult Skills provision people from minority groups are twice as strongly represented as might be expected based on their representation in the wider adult population of the area.

However, to provide further context, although 29% of the adult population (aged 19-64) of West Yorkshire are from an ethnic minority group this rises to over 50% of the adult population living in the most deprived neighbourhoods (IMD decile 1) and to 40% of the adult population with no qualifications. This suggests that the current levels of engagement with ethnic minority learners are broadly in keeping with what is required to address the most disadvantaged people within this broad group.



**Figure 9 New learners by ethnicity, 2022-2023 academic year**

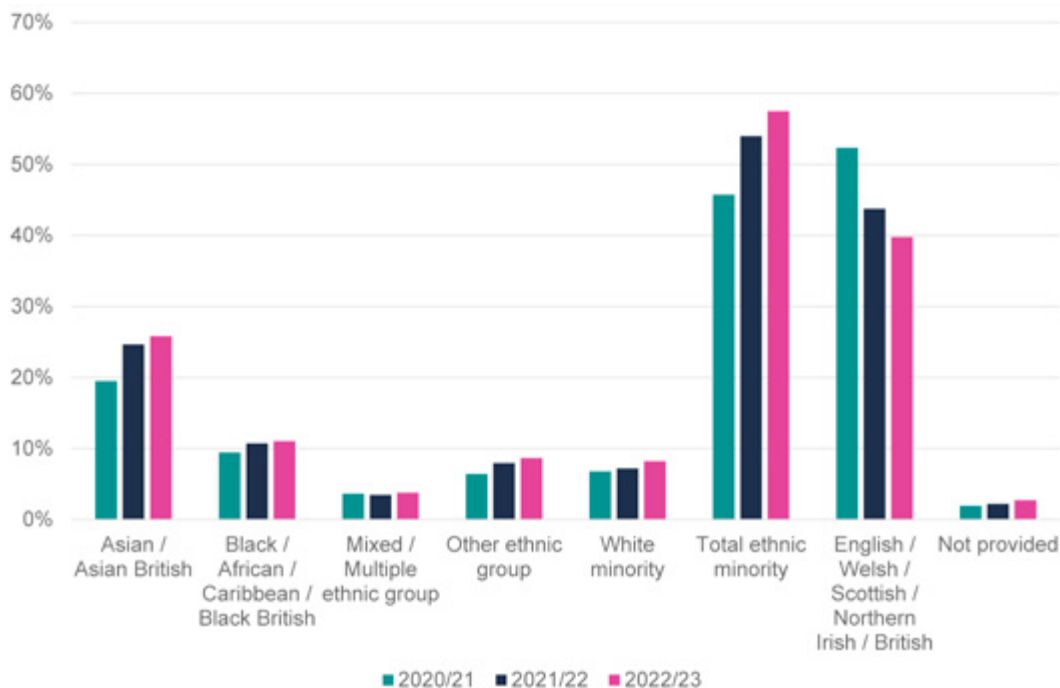
For Adult Skills, Community Learning and FcJ all broad ethnic minority groups account for a higher proportion of AEB-funded learners relative to their representation in the population.

Figures published by the Department for Education allow comparisons between West Yorkshire and national position but they have a different basis to those presented above as they relate to learner participation and do not allow for the White minority group to be disaggregated from the wider White group. The figures show that participation by non-white ethnic minority learners was much higher in West Yorkshire than at national level.

49% of participation on adult Education and Training in West Yorkshire in 2022-2023 was by non-white ethnic minority learners compared with the national average of 35%.

41% of participation on Community Learning in West Yorkshire in 2022-2023 was by non-white ethnic minority learners compared with a national average of 28%.

<sup>1</sup> The ethnic minority definition has been expanded in this year's report. In 2021/22 the ethnic minority definition consisted for non-white ethnic groups. In 2022/23 white minority groups, including Gypsy or Irish Traveller and Irish, have been added to the overarching ethnic minority definition.



**Figure 10 Trend in new learners by ethnicity (% of total new learners)**

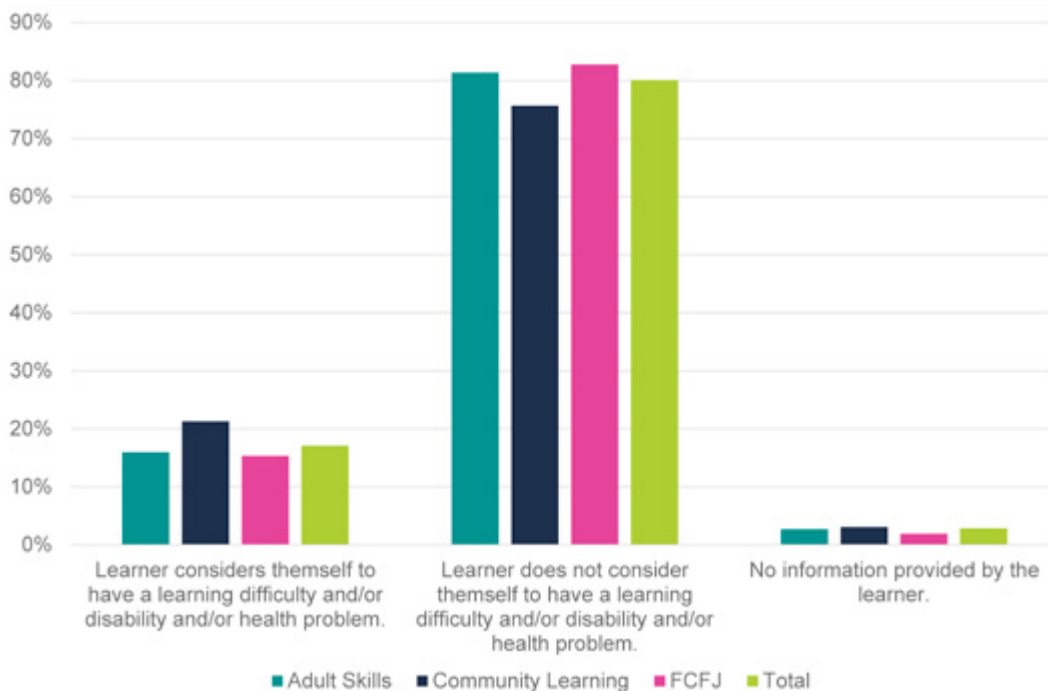
The proportion of total learners from an ethnic minority group has grown in both years of devolved AEB, from 46% in 2020-2021 (pre-devo) to 54% in 2021-2022 and to 57% in 2022-2023. There has also been growth in each broad ethnic group’s share of learners. The overall count of ethnic minority learners grew by 10% or 2,340 between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. There was growth across all broad ethnic groups except for the White group which saw a decline of 3% in learner count. The count of Asian / Asian British learners increased by 880 or 8%; learners in Black / African / Caribbean / Black British group grew by 310 or 7%; learners from the Mixed / Multiple ethnic group increased by 180 or 12%; learners classified to the Other ethnic group grew by 690 or 16%.

The proportion of ethnic minority learners participating in Adult Skills courses increased from 57% in 2021-2022 to 62% in 2022-2023, whilst for Community Learning the proportion increased from 48% to 49%. The share of ethnic minority learners in FCfJ grew substantially from 43% to 51% year on year.

Learners from an ethnic minority group were less likely to be in employment and more likely to be unemployed or inactive than English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British learners reflecting the position across the wider population. Only 22% of starts for ethnic minority learners were for learners in employment (compared with a figure of 37% for English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British learners), whilst 60% of starts for ethnic minority learners were for unemployed learners (English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British: 50%).

## Disability

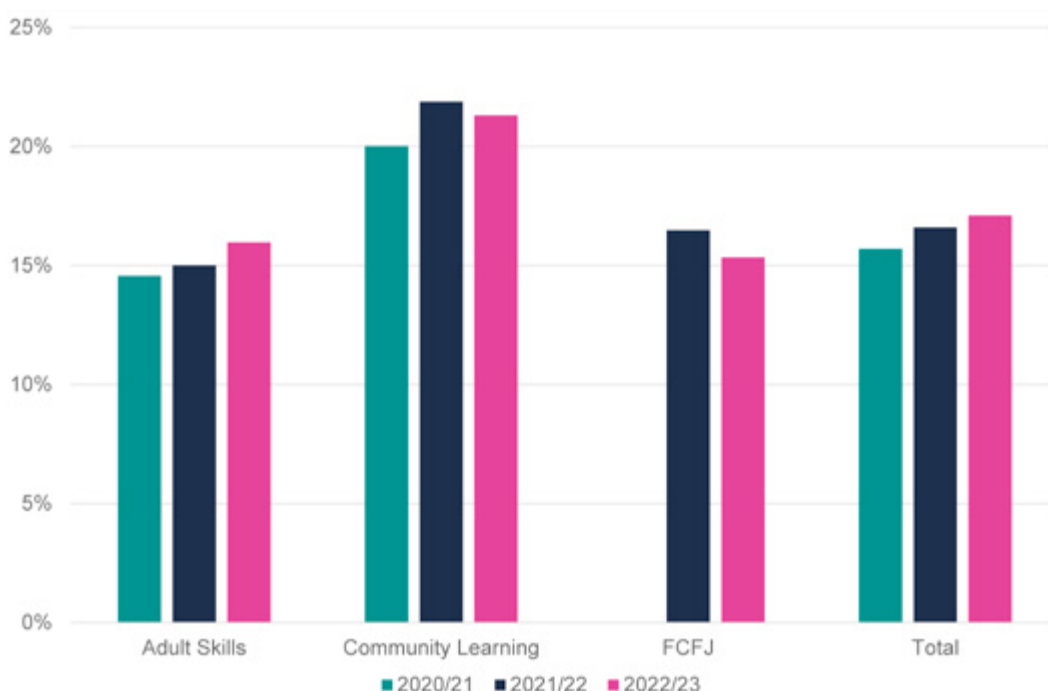
Around 17% of AEB learners in West Yorkshire in 2022-2023 indicated that they had a learning difficulty and / or disability and / or health problem. This is lower than the proportion of the wider working age population of West Yorkshire who are Equality Act core or work-limiting disabled in West Yorkshire, which stands at 24%.



**Figure 11 Profile of new learners by disability status**

The proportion of Community Learning participants in West Yorkshire who say they have a learning difficulty / disability / health problem is somewhat higher, at 21%, than the figure for Adult Skills of 16% and FCfJ of 15%.

However, for Adult Skills and FCfJ a further 9% of learners who did not declare a learning difficulty, disability or health problem received learning support, raising the proportion with support needs to 25% of total learners in these strands.



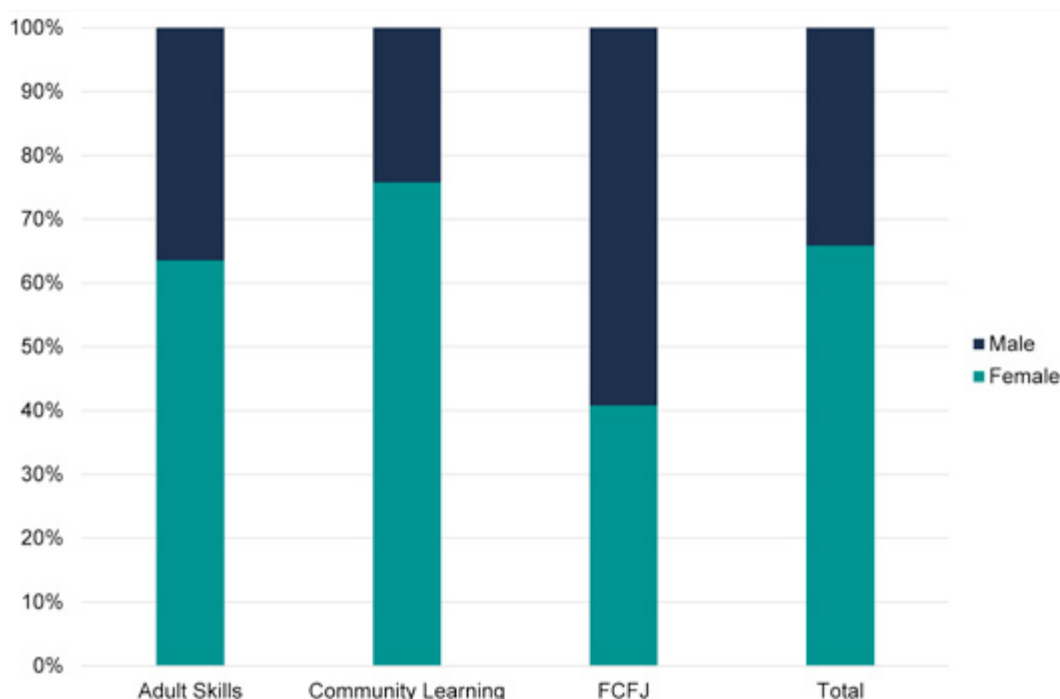
**Figure 12 Proportion of new learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem by programme strand**

The proportion of learners with a learning difficulty, disability or health problem remained unchanged at 17% compared with the previous year. There was an increase in the proportion for the Adult Skills strand of one point but a decline of one point for both Community Learning and FCfJ. The absolute number of learners declaring a learning difficulty, disability or health problem increased by 470 or 6%.

## Sex

Women and girls are in the majority among West Yorkshire’s learners for two out of three programme strands, accounting for two-thirds (66%) of total learners, 64% of Adult Skills learners and three-quarters (76%) of Community Learning participants. Both proportions are much higher than female representation in West Yorkshire’s population aged 19 and above.

However, male learners are in the majority for FCfJ, accounting for 59% of learners in this strand.

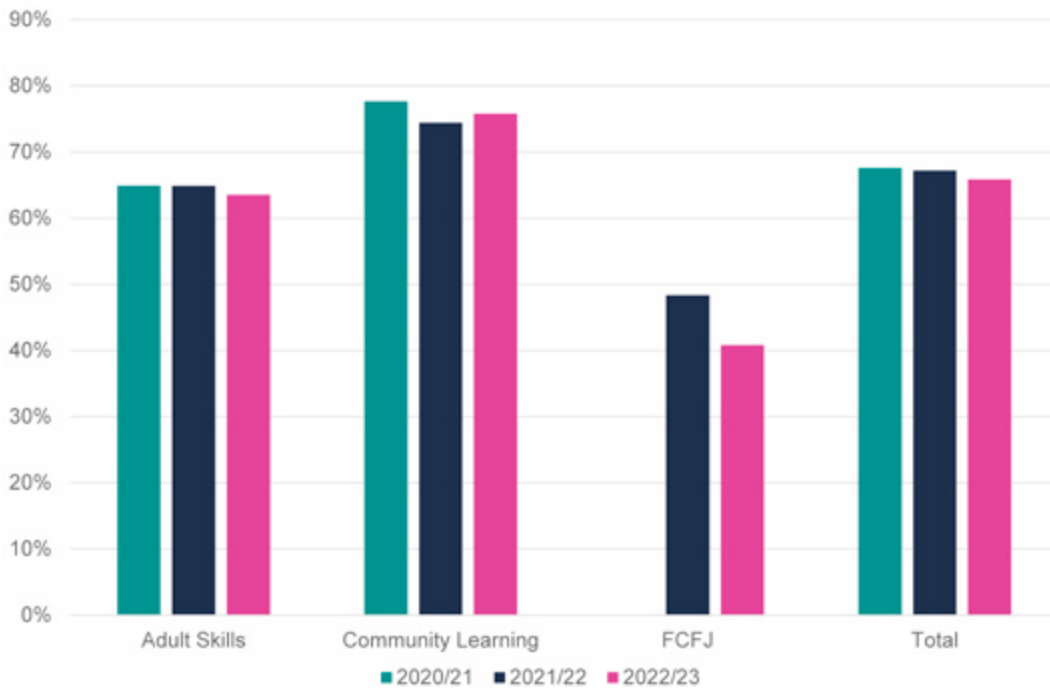


**Figure 13 Profile of new learners by sex (% of total learners)**

This picture is in line with the national profile. The national average proportions of female learners are 64% and 74% for 19+ Education and Training and Community Learning respectively.

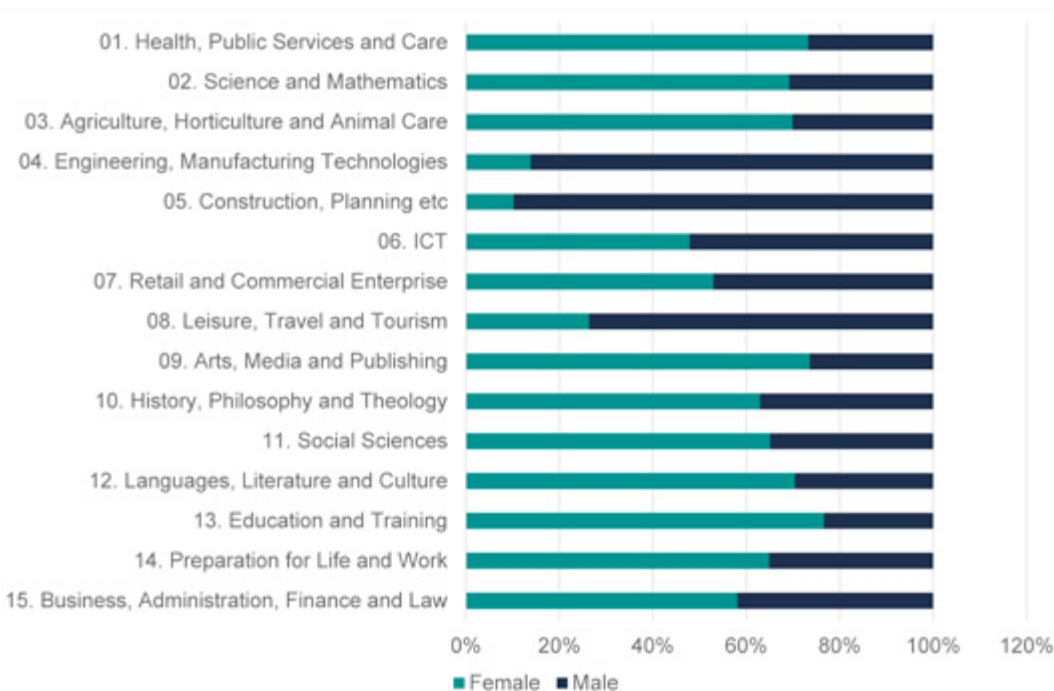
The proportion of female learners fell slightly between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 (with a corresponding increase in the share of male learners) from 67% to 66%, driven by falls in the female proportions of learners in Adult Skills and FCfJ.

Nonetheless the absolute number of female learners increased in 2022-2023, by 390 or 1%, although the number of male learners grew by 1,080 or 8%.



**Figure 14 Proportion of new learners who were female by programme strand (% of total learners)**

The Adult Skills and FCFJ programmes in West Yorkshire face a similar challenge of gender segregation that is present in other forms of education and training and in the wider employment market.



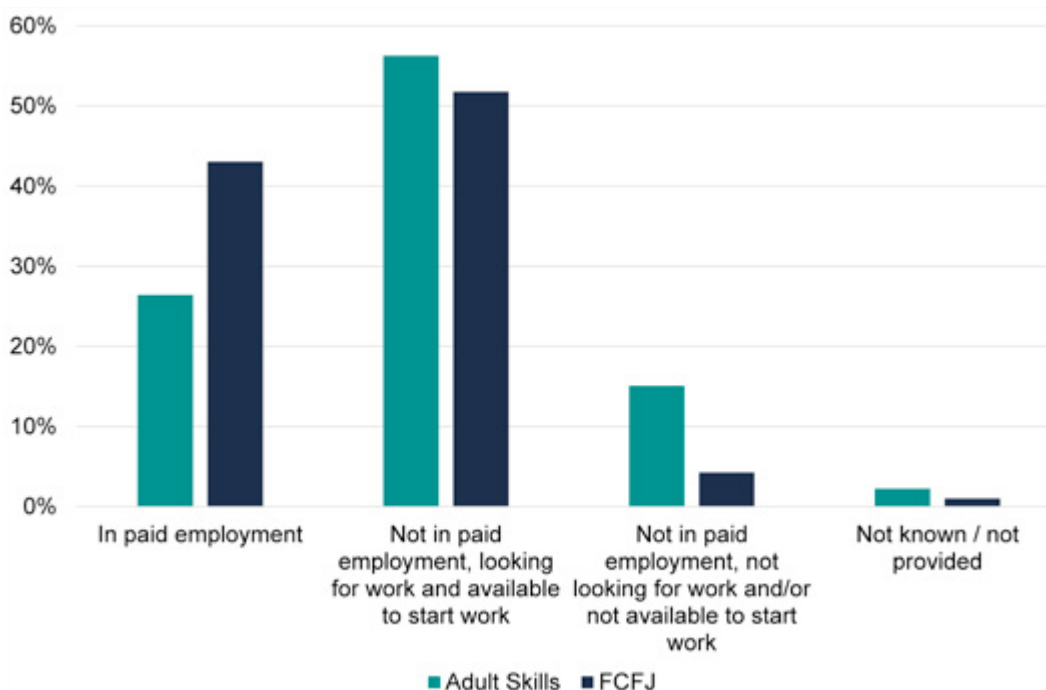
**Figure 15 Profile of Adult Skills and FCFJ starts by subject area and sex of learner (% of total learners, West Yorkshire, 2022-2023 academic year)**

Women account for the vast majority of enrolments in some subjects, most notably Health, public services and care (73% of the total) and Education and training (77% of the total). But although women contribute almost two-thirds of total enrolments they represent a small minority in “traditionally male” subjects such as Construction (10% of enrolments) and Engineering and manufacturing (14%). This is a concern because these latter subjects offer good prospects for pay and progression.



## Supporting the unemployed

The Combined Authority's AEB Strategy prioritises supporting the unemployed to gain and sustain employment through the development of economically valuable skills.



**Figure 16 Profile of Adult Skills and FCFJ starts by learner employment status (% of total starts), West Yorkshire, 2022-2023 academic year**

Around 16,760 unemployed learners were supported through the Adult Skills strand of the programme during 2022-2023, accounting for 56% of total starts in that strand of the programme. In addition, there were 4,460 learners who were not in paid employment but were not looking for work and / or not available for work (i.e. economically inactive), accounting for 15% of Adult Skills starts. Many of these inactive individuals will be making their first steps towards engagement with the labour market.

Turning to FCFJ, the employment status profile is different, with greater engagement of employed learners. There were 580 employed learners in 2022-2023, contributing 43% of starts in this strand. Unemployed learners were still in the majority, however, with 850 learners, accounting for 52% of starts.

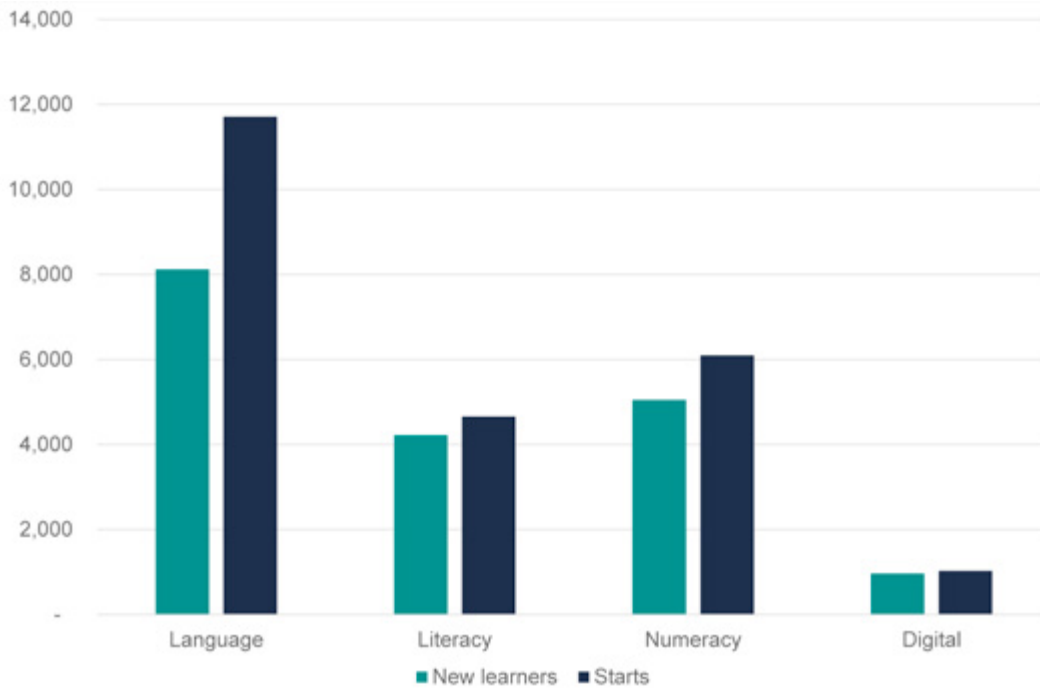
## Supporting progression in employment

A priority within the Combined Authority's AEB strategy is to unlock progression opportunities and career adaptability through skills, particularly for those on low wages and with insecure work. There were 15,470 Adult Skills starts associated with employed learners, accounting for 26% of total Adult Skills starts. Around 70% of starts for employed learners were fully funded (compared with 84% of total Adult Skills starts).

Under the Combined Authority's funding rules for its low wage pilot providers may fully fund provision up to and including level 2 if the learner is employed but paid at a rate below the low wage threshold. The Combined Authority's threshold is pegged to the Real Living Wage and is higher than the national rate that is applied to non-devolved provision. During 2022-2023 there were 6,600 starts under the low wage pilot in West Yorkshire, accounting for 11% of total Adult Skills starts.

## Basic skills

Basic skills provision is a substantial element of the AEB programme, supported by a legal entitlement to full funding for English and maths, up to and including level 2 for adults who have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 (C). In addition, there is full funding available for essential digital skills qualifications, up to and including level 1, for adults who have digital skills assessed at below level 1. There was a total of 23,500 starts by 14,450 learners on basic skills courses during the 2022-2023 academic year, equivalent to 40% of all starts on the Adult Skills programme.

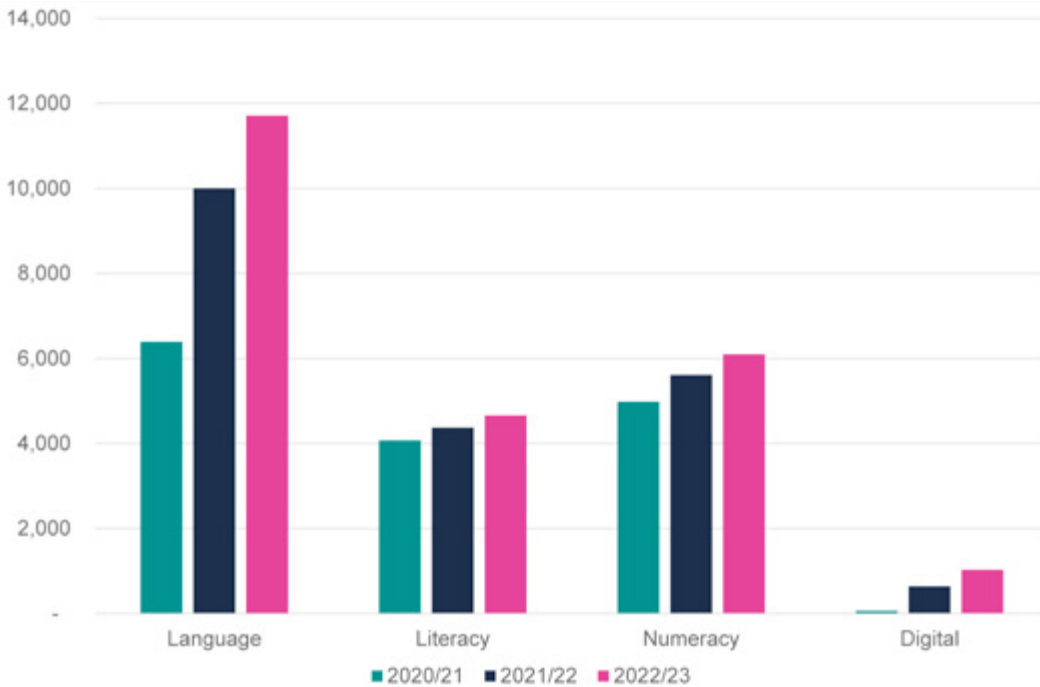


**Figure 17 Count of basic skills starts and learners by type, West Yorkshire, 2022-2023 academic year**

The biggest basic skills category, in terms of both learners and enrolments, was Language, which primarily consists of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision. There were around 11,710 starts on these courses during 2022-2023 (20% of all Adult Skills starts). Numeracy was the second largest category with 6,100 starts (10% of the Adult Skills total). There were 4,660 starts on literacy courses during the academic year (8% of total starts).

The fourth basic skills category of Digital<sup>2</sup> had smaller volumes of starts (around 1,030 or 2% of the total).

<sup>2</sup> This category of basic skills aims does not include all aims that fall within the digital entitlement.

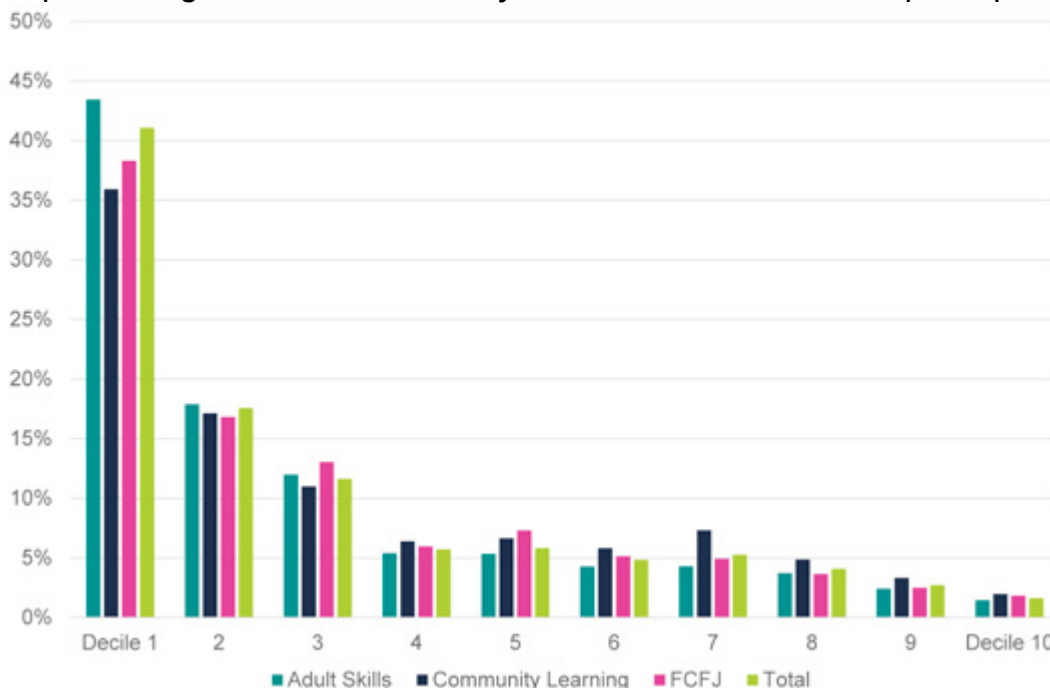


**Figure 18 Trend in count of basic skills starts by type**

There was substantial growth in the number of basic skills starts between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, with year on year growth of 2,870 or 14% whilst the number of basic skills learners grew by 6%, a net increase of 640. Growth in starts was driven primarily by an increase of 17%, or 1,710, in the number of ESOL starts, although there was growth across all basic skills categories, including numeracy (+9%) and literacy (+7%). The number of basic digital starts grew by 61%, albeit from a low base.

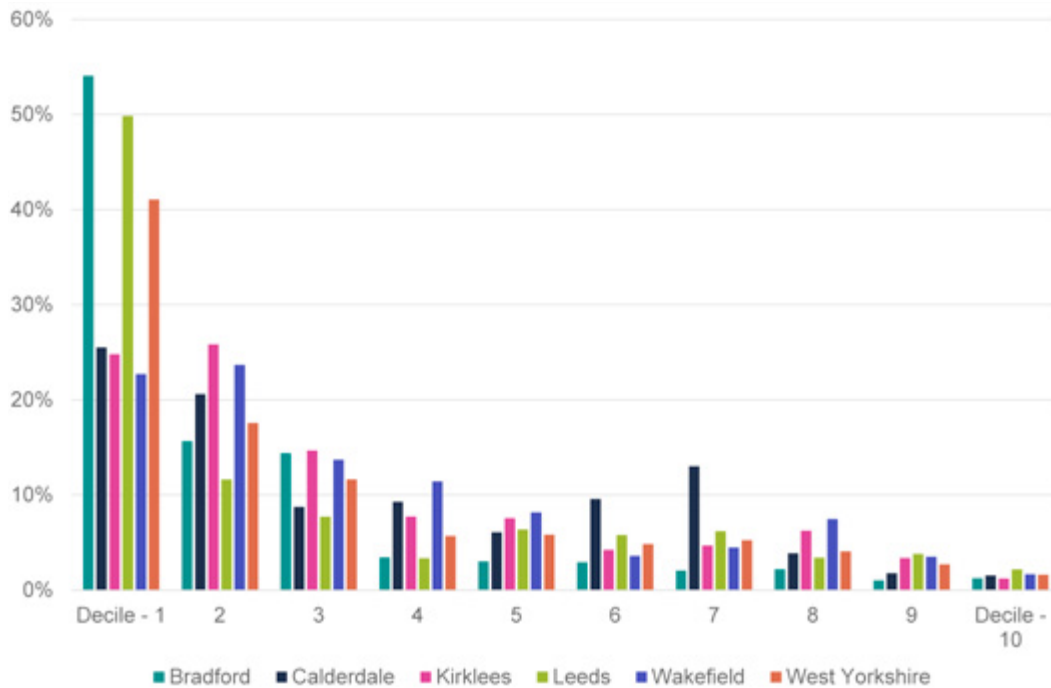
### Deprivation

Residents of deprived neighbourhoods are a priority audience for the Adult Education Budget and attract a disadvantage uplift in the Adult Skills funding that providers receive, recognising that they are sometimes more costly to recruit and retain in learning. During the 2022-2023 academic year 18,310 learners (or 41% of the total) were resident in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD decile 1).



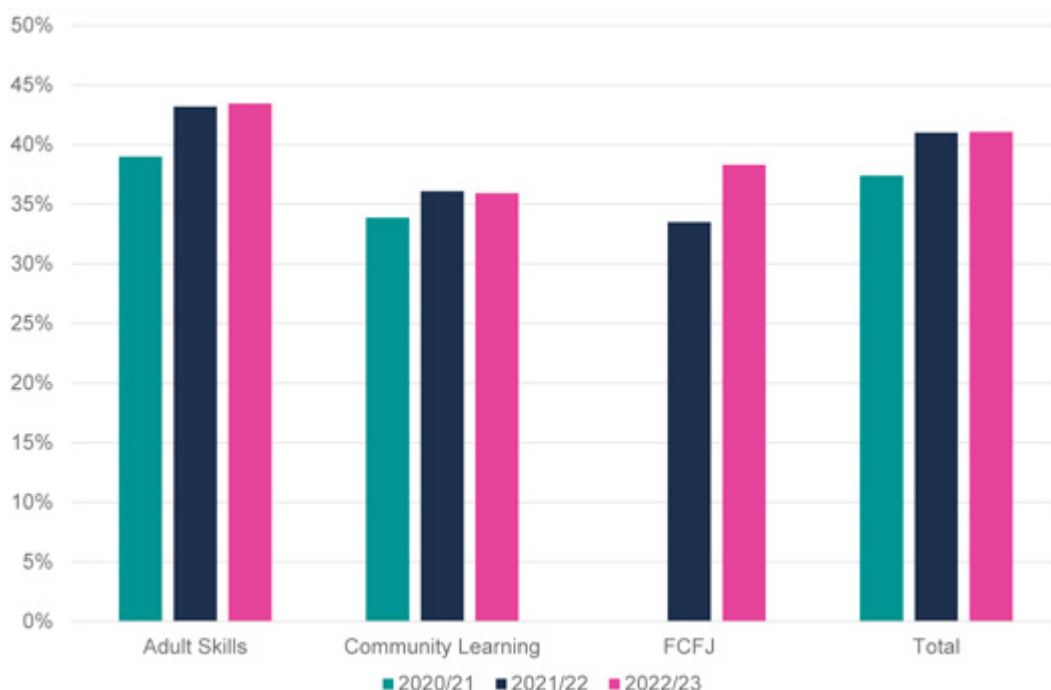
**Figure 19 Profile of new learners by Index of Multiple Deprivation decile and programme strand (% of total new learners)**

Around 14,060 Adult Skills learners were residents of the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods, equivalent to 43% of total learners in this strand and somewhat higher than the proportion for Community Learning of 36% (4,870 in absolute terms). For FCFJ, 690 learners, or 38% of the total, were drawn from the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods.



**Figure 20 Profile of new learners by Index of Multiple Deprivation decile and local authority (% of total new learners)**

The profile varies across individual local authorities. Bradford and Leeds have much higher proportions of learners who reside in the most acutely deprived neighbourhoods (decile 1), with 54% and 50% respectively, compared with figures ranging from 23% for Wakefield and 26% for Kirklees. This reflects the fact that Bradford and Leeds have a wider prevalence of acute deprivation than the remaining local authorities. However, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield each have higher proportions of learners who are drawn from decile 2 than Bradford or Leeds.



**Figure 21 Trend in the proportion of new learners who live in the most acutely deprived neighbourhoods nationally (IMD decile 1)**

The proportion of learners from the most acutely disadvantaged neighbourhoods (which fall into top decile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation) has increased in West Yorkshire since the introduction of devolution, from 37% to 41% for the whole programme. However, there was little change year-on-year in the 2022-2023 academic year, and this was also the case for Adult Skills and Community Learning, although the proportion of FCfJ learners drawn from the most deprived neighbourhoods did increase.

Looking at this from the perspective of learner volumes, the number of learners from the most deprived neighbourhoods still increased by 630 or 4% in 2022-2023 reflecting the overall expansion of the programme.

## Legal Entitlements

The AEB programme includes support for 4 legal entitlements to full funding for eligible adult learners. These entitlements apply nationwide and devolved areas are required to honour them.

These entitlements enable eligible learners to be fully funded for the following qualifications:

- English and maths, up to and including level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 (C), or higher, and/or
- first full qualification at level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23, and/or
- first full qualification at level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23
- essential digital skills qualifications, up to and including level 1, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have digital skills assessed at below level 1.

Total spend on the entitlements through the devolved programme was £9m in support of a total of 8,050 starts.

**The following section examines the take-up of each entitlement in terms of enrolments during the 2022-2023 academic year (starts) and highlights any changes with the previous year.**

### ***English and maths, up to and including level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 (C), or higher***

There were 6,100 starts under this entitlement in West Yorkshire in 2022-2023, with around 4,200 learners taking up the entitlement. Forty-five per cent of starts were for literacy and 55% for numeracy.

There was a small increase in starts under this entitlement of 3%, or around 200, between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.

Total spend (total earned cash) on this entitlement during 2022-2023 was £6.2m, including the Combined Authority's funding uplift of 10%.

### ***First full qualification at Level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23***

This is one of two entitlements for learners aged 19-23. These entitlements are important for West Yorkshire because the proportions of young people in the region achieving a qualification at Level 2 and Level 3 by the age of 19 is below the national average.

There were around 160 starts (undertaken by 130 learners) under this entitlement during 2022-2023, less than 1% of total starts on the Adult Skills programme. These figures were largely unchanged on those recorded for 2021-2022.

As a supplement to the national entitlement the Combined Authority has brought in a flexibility which allows learners aged 19-23 who lack a full Level 2 to undertake a qualification at Level 2 that is not classed as full. This is not permitted under the national funding rules. There were nearly 400 starts under this flexibility during the academic year, with three-quarters of them being associated with unemployed learners.

Total spend (total earned cash) on this entitlement during 2022-2023 was £394,000, including the Combined Authority’s funding uplift.

**First full qualification at Level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23**

There were approximately 500 starts under this entitlement during the 2022-2023 academic year, relating to 480 learners. This makes it another small element of total Adult Skills provision, accounting for less than 1% of total starts. The number of starts fell by 28% for this entitlement compared with the 2021-2022 academic year.

Total spend (total earned cash) on this entitlement during 2022-2023 was just over £2m.

**Essential Digital Skills qualifications, up to and including level 1, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have digital skills assessed at below level 1**

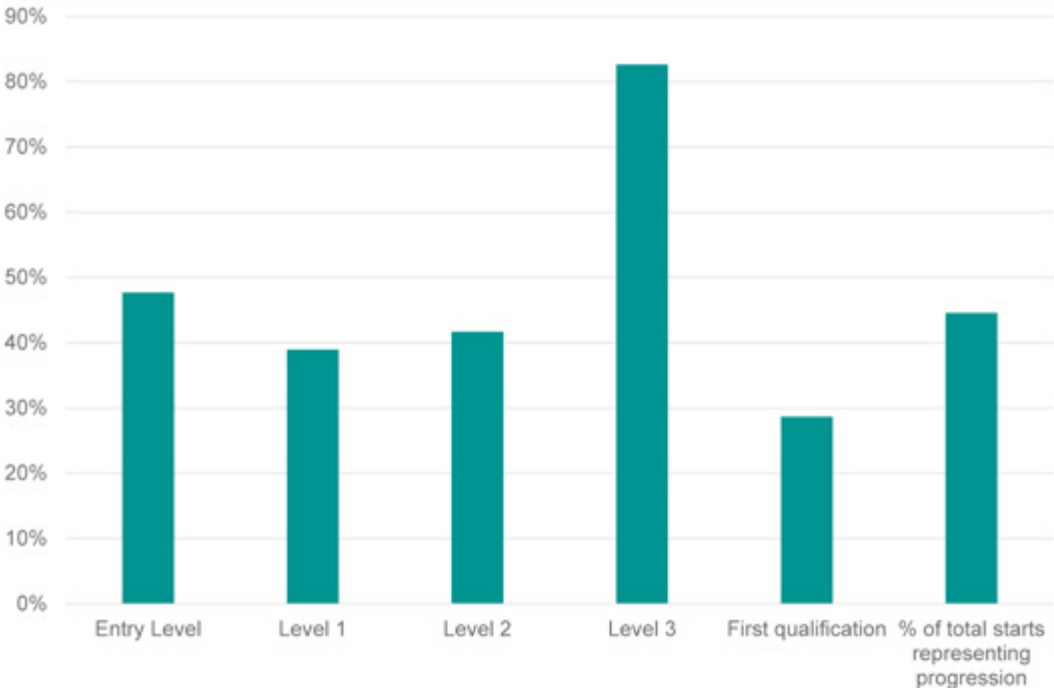
During 2022-2023 there were 1,290 starts under the Essential Digital Skills entitlement. This represents a net increase of more than 80% on starts recorded in the 2021-2022 academic year. The national entitlement was supplemented by 200 starts delivered under a local flexibility that provides access to additional digital aims.

Two-thirds of starts under the Essential Digital Skills entitlement were for learners who were unemployed.

Total spend (total earned cash) on this entitlement during 2022-2023 was £421,000, including the Combined Authority’s funding uplift.

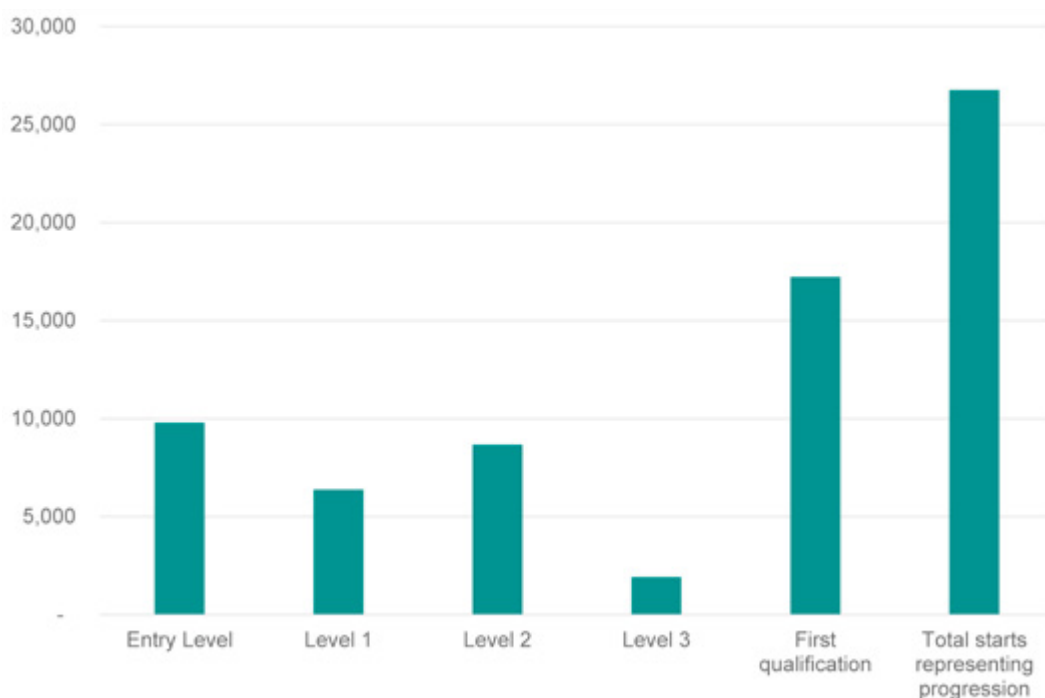
**Progression**

A key measure of the added value of AEB is the extent to which learners are progressing. The following analysis focuses on learners who started a course at a higher level than their existing level of attainment or studied for their first qualification.



**Figure 21 Proportion of Adult Skills and FCfJ starts that represent progression for the learner by Level (% of starts for a course that were at a higher level than learner’s prior attainment)**

Overall, 45% of Adult Skills and FCfJ starts, or 26,760 in absolute terms, provided progression for the learner during 2022-2023. Around 17,230 starts, or 29% of the total, were for learners with no prior qualifications. Nearly half of starts at Entry level were for learners with no qualifications, whilst 39% of starts at Level 1 were for learners qualified at Entry level or with no prior qualifications. At Level 3 more than 80% of starts were for learners whose highest prior qualifications were at Level 2 and below.



**Figure 22 Count of Adult Skills and FCfJ starts that represent progression for the learner by Level (count of starts for a course that were at a higher level than learner’s prior attainment)**

Another measure of progression is the extent to which learners are progressing from Community Learning provision to more formal learning delivered through the Adult Skills programme.

During 2022-2023, 23% of learners who enrolled for a Community Learning course subsequently enrolled on an Adult Skills course; this is equivalent to 3,630 learners in absolute terms<sup>3</sup>.

### Success rates and achievements

The extent to which enrolments on courses linked to formal qualifications result in achievement of those qualifications is a key measure of the added value of the Adult Skills and FCfJ programme strands.

The method used to calculate success rates for Adult Skills is detailed in the box below.

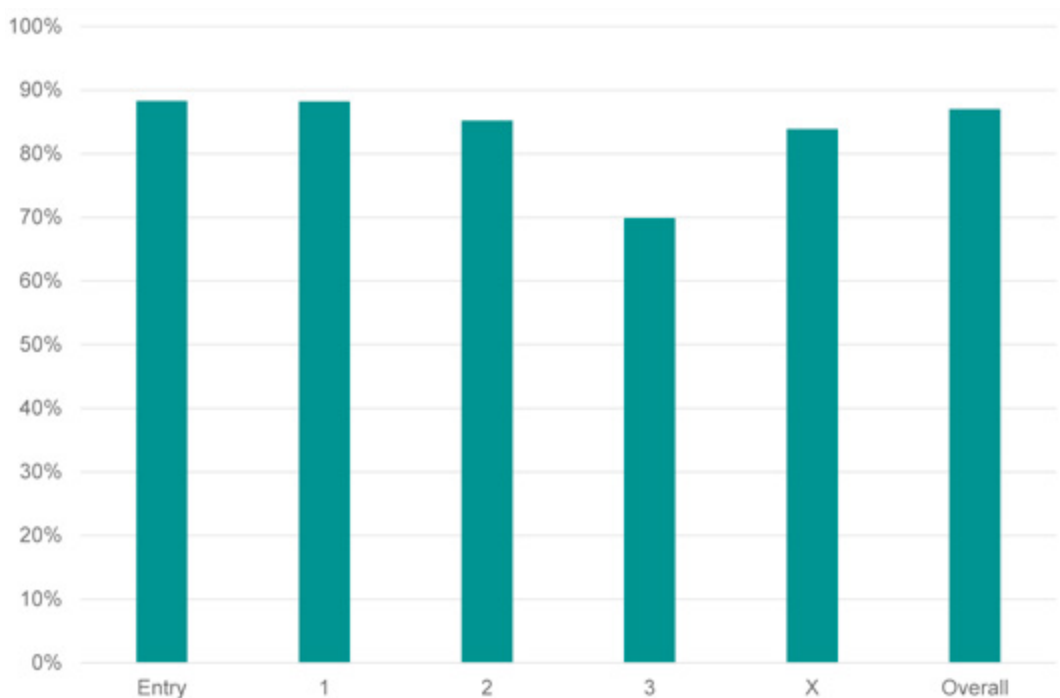
#### Calculation method for success rate

1. Success Rate = Leavers x Retention x Achievement
2. Retention = Completion status of 2: The learner has completed the learning activities leading to the learning aim (expressed as % of total leavers)
3. Achievement = Achievement Status of 1: Achieved (expressed as % of retained).

<sup>3</sup> The figure of 23% is not comparable with the figure of 11% presented in last year’s report. The latest figure takes account of progression from Community Learning to Adult Skills provision at different providers as well as at the same provider, whereas the figures presented last year relate to progression at the same provider only.

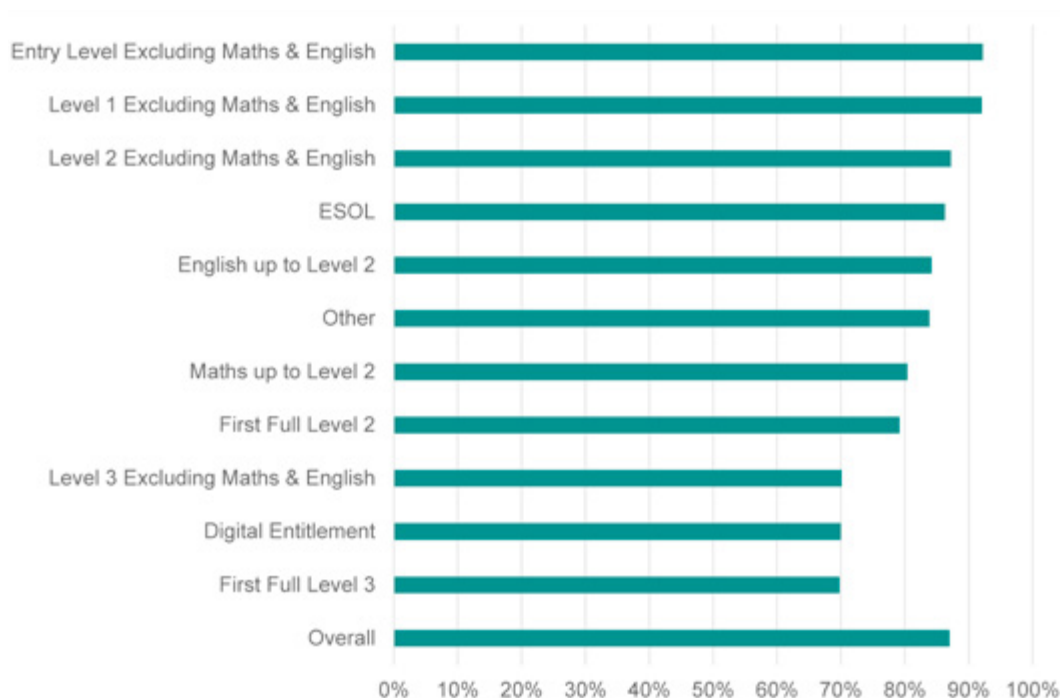
The overall success rate for the Adult Skills programme for 2022-2023 academic year was 87%. This means that for 91% of starts on a learning aim the learner was retained; of these retained starts, 95% of learning aims were achieved. When multiplied together these two figures give the overall success rate of 87%.

Success rates differ by the notional level of the learning aim. Entry Level and Level 1 aims have the highest success rate and Level 3 courses have the lowest. This is to be expected since Level 3 courses are generally longer and more demanding on the learner. However, it is notable that the success rate for Level 3 aims increased from 64% in 2021-2022 to 70% in 2022-2023.



**Figure 23 Success rates for Adult Skills learning aims by level, 2022-2023**

As the figure (below) shows, vocational aims at Level 1, Entry Level and Level 2 had the highest success rates followed by ESOL provision. Success rates for aims at Level 3 plus Digital Entitlement aims were the lowest of any of the categories.



**Figure 24 Success rates for Adult Skills learning aims by provision type, 2022-2023**



Success rates are fairly consistent across other dimensions, including residence of learner (at local authority level) but vary by sector subject area and this is set out below.



**Figure 25 Success rates for Adult Skills learning aims by subject, 2022-2023**

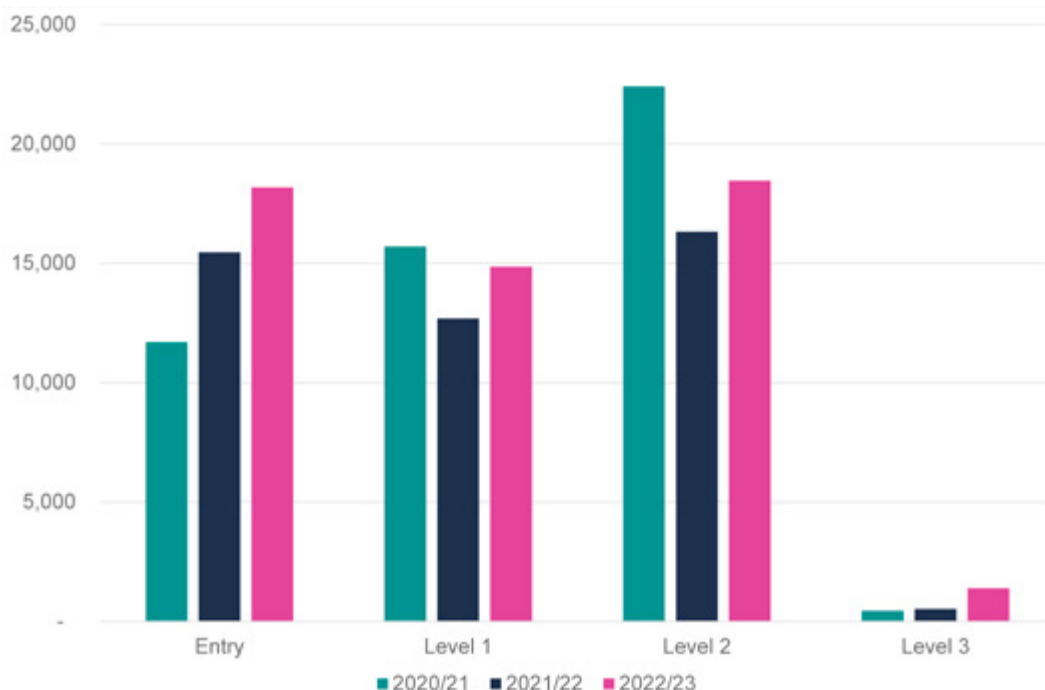
*Note: Subjects with fewer than 100 starts are excluded*

Success rates by subject range from 98% for Warehousing and distribution down to 64% for Accounting and finance. These differences are partly due to the differing profiles by qualification level of starts ○

National figures are available for Education and Training provision for learners aged 19 and above for 2021-2022 – they are not yet available for 2022-2023. The scope of this provision is wider than the Adult Education Budget and therefore the national figures are not directly comparable with our local figures. However, they do show, on an indicative basis, that West Yorkshire’s performance was similar to the national average during the period. Key figures are as follows:

- The national retention rate was 91.9% in 2021-2022 (excluding Level 4 aims).
- The national achievement rate (referred to as pass rate in national reporting) was 93.7%.
- The national success rate, based on our definition was 86.2%, slight below the West Yorkshire figure of 87.0%.

The pattern of success rates by qualification level is broadly similar at national level to the West Yorkshire position in that the lower qualification levels have better rates than higher level qualifications.



**Figure 26 Trend in volume of qualification achievements by Level for Adult Skills and Free Courses for Jobs strands**

The overall volume of achievements delivered through the Adult Skills and FCfJ strands in 2022-2023 was 52,900, a 17% increase on 2021-2022. There was also a year-on-year increase in achievements for all levels in 2022-2023. Entry Level achievements grew by 2,720 or 18%; Level 1 achievements grew by 2,170 or 17% and Level 2 by 2,130 or 13%. Level 3 achievements saw the fastest percentage growth of 860 or 163%. However, the volumes of achievements recorded in 2022-2023 for both Level 1 and Level 2 are lower than the figures for 2020-2021, although there was substantial net growth at Entry level and Level 3.

Around 8,300 Adult Skills and FCfJ learners achieved their first qualification during the 2022-2023 academic year; 5,000 achieved a first Level 2 qualification and 1,100 achieved a first qualification at Level 3.

### Destinations and Progression

The following analysis is based on data available from the Individualised Learner Record, as presented in the Destinations and Progression data report. It is acknowledged that this does not provide a full picture of destinations and progression – this information deficit will be addressed through our plans for future evaluation outlined above.

Overall, 16,600 learners, or 33% of total learners, were recorded as having a positive destination of employment, voluntary work or education during 2022-2023. However, many learners do not have a destination recorded: the percentage increases to 68% when the denominator is limited to learners with a known destination.

In addition, many learners are in employment, education or voluntary work when they commence their study. To take account of this we have developed a measure of positive progression which shows when a learner moves from unemployment or inactivity to a positive destination. Overall, 8,400 learners achieved positive progression in 2022-2023; this is equivalent to 17% of all learners and 34% of learners with a known destination.

The majority of positive progressions relate to entry into education (77% of learners), followed by employment (22%) and voluntary work (2%)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup>Since learners can have multiple destinations these percentages sum to more than 100%.

All Learners	Count of learners	Positive outcome	Positive progression
All Learners	49,640	16,590 (33%)	8,410 (17%)
Unemployed on start	30,420	-	8,410 (28%)

Learners with known destination	Count of learners	Positive outcome	Positive progression
All Learners	24,450	16,590 (68%)	8,410 (34%)
Unemployed on start	15,930	-	8,410 (53%)

**Table 1 and 2: Summary of learner destinations and progression**

We can also focus down on learners who were unemployed and actively seeking and available for work at the start of their course. Among this group 28% of all learners experienced positive progression, rising to 53% of unemployed learners with a known destination.

## Provider Feedback

At the end of the first year of the Combined Authority's management of the devolved AEB fund, a provider survey was undertaken to gather feedback on progress made and to understand where to focus improvements for future years. A number of recommendations were implemented from the provider feedback including improving communication and reducing the number of meetings for maximum impact. A similar survey was conducted to evaluate progress made for year 2 of devolution.

Providers were overall positive regarding the experience of devolution and impact made:

- 89% of providers found Key Account Manager relationship extremely or very helpful. 'Excellent. The relationship is very open and leads to better delivery and curriculum decision making.'
- 72% of providers reported that they had seen an impact of the funding rule flexibilities on their ability to engage WY residents 'I think the management of AEB in WY is excellent'
- 89% of providers have found Partnership meetings extremely or very helpful which is an increase of 19% since year 1, there is still more we can do 'would like to see more sharing of best practice'
- 76% of providers were largely positive about the impact that devolution has made on residents. 'Whilst still early to see fuller impacts, the flexibilities, determination to target those with greatest need and make up of providers is an excellent platform for impact.'
- 80% of providers have expressed positivity regarding communication methods, such as review meetings, data packs, newsletters, exception reporting, and webinars. 'Our monitoring meetings are always enjoyable and give us a dedicated opportunity to raise and discuss issues should we need them.'

Areas for improvement include ensuring newsletters are regular and impactful, review the number of individual emails sent and whether this can be consolidated and consider how the impact of changes in key staff can be mitigated to ensure minimal disruption.

# Learner Success Stories and Testimonials

In response to recent redundancies at Wilkos. A number of individuals did not have the skills to apply for jobs online. Referred by Job Centre Plus they attended a 4-week introduction to IT course which included job search and application support. It improved their confidence to such an extent that they secured new jobs in retail within weeks.

“I can now apply for jobs online and I am so pleased I now have a job again”

“This course has helped me so much and I will attend the next course to learn even more before I start my new job”

## Responding to Bus Driver shortage:

**Alistaire Leake**, now a full-time driver at Fourways Coaches, said:

“The training was fantastic and gave me an opportunity to see where I could be working. Everyone was so welcoming and made it easy.

“I knew a lot about the industry already, but this has really enabled me to ensure this was the right decision for me and my family.”

**Gregg Scott**, chief executive of training provider Realise, said:

“Our Route to Success initiative is an innovative programme which was first launched in West Yorkshire and is now being delivered in a number of other areas across the UK.

“Bus driver shortages are a common problem around the country and we are proud to be playing our part in addressing a major issue in many communities, as well as providing opportunities for individuals to launch a new career.

“To now have more than 100 people in employment with bus operators from Route to Success and helping local residents move around West Yorkshire is a major milestone and we look forward to adding to those numbers in the months to come.”

## Learner quotes

### Amara Arshad

“If I had not completed my level 3 Course, I would not have moved on to my BSc in Computing to develop my skills further. Having a good career in the future will benefit me, my family and set an example to my daughter that she can also have a successful career in whichever job she decides to do.”

### Deborah Schofield

Started on level 1 Functional Skills course in English and maths, progressed onto GCSE English and Maths, she became a classroom volunteer for the level 2 food safety and allergy awareness classes (gaining both qualifications herself). She then progressed to a level 3 food safety award. Finally gaining employment two days a week with the ambition to complete her level 3 teaching qualification. Deborah was vulnerable, very isolated, didn't mix much with people and believes (in her words) without the training “I would be a goner”, “For the first time in my life I feel that this is where I belong, where I'm meant to be.”

## **Lilianna Amelicheva**

“The ESOL course provided the opportunity to study the Empowering Women course which I can’t praise highly enough. I have progressed onto the Next Steps course which is helping me to focus on my career goals. I have also applied to volunteer in the ESOL department, and the staff have been very supportive in helping me. Without this course I would not be able to integrate into British life as well as I can now”

**Erno Csorvasi** - Started E2 ESOL course in 2019 and completed L1 in 2023 then progressed onto L3 ICT course so he can progress to university to study ICT.

“Without this course I would not be able to progress to a rewarding career which will enable me to use my skills and reach my potential. As well as progressing my career, my language skills enable me to engage in everyday tasks and social activities fully and independently.”

## **Rail Engineering Course**

### **R Shears**

“When enrolling in this PTS course (Rail Engineering NVQ L2) I was a bit apprehensive about it all at first but once I got started it opened up my prospects for employment.

The course itself was very well put together learning about all aspects of rail, tracks, power ac/dc, tools and plant used and foremost SAFETY. Its run by a group of wonderful people from the people in the background to face to face tutoring, I received a good knowledge of information throughout my course from the tutor Tony Green. He was patient with everyone and understood all different levels of ability and learning needs and also the constant updates of the course and what was happening during the time in class and out on track by Sarah.

I would recommend this to all types of people in the future this really helped me. My goal when I started this course was to gain employment! and now I am employed.”

# West Yorkshire Combined Authority

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